

Everybody's

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Rafael Sabatini's
novel, *The Perugian*,
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(R. Chick)
Mrs Wilson Woodrow's
new love-mystery story,
"Thoroughbred."

Hugh Walpole.

Original from
Mrs. M. J. M. S.



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Gen.
War



NUMBER ONE

Everybody's

JULY, 1923



VOLUME XLIX

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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She stepped into a waiting chair and rolled away, waving her hand back to them.

A New Serial by the Author of "Swallowed Up"

THOROUGHbred

The Changing of the Course of a Little Kentucky Creek Starts a Drama That Reshapes Lives and Makes a Story That Holds One Enthrallèd—an Appealing Blend of Love and Mystery

By Mrs. Wilson Woodrow

Illustrations by O. F. Schmidt

PARK AVENUE is the least dramatic of the thoroughfares that run like longitudinal wires through the giant gridiron which is upper New York. It lacks the incandescent glamour of Broadway, the sordidness and color of the lower East Side, the fly-specked secretiveness of Sixth and Eighth Avenues, the splendor and commercialism of Fifth.

So new that the smell of mortar lingers in the air, it is the city's Spotless Town—a wide, spick-and-span boulevard where the traffic rolls decorously on pneumatic-tired wheels, and behind the featureless fronts of the tall buff apartment-houses luxury is standardized to incomes of twenty-five thousand dollars and upward—a Mecca for "people of the better sort."

Yet even into this swept and denatured close intrudes the eternal human comedy—the fabric of mystery, the mask of intrigue, the texture of romance—like a lace mantilla in a sale of union suits, a rose of Shiraz at the window of a clinic—for this is the story of Constance Lee.

In one of the most austere and exclusive of those huge modern apartment-buildings rising mountainous above Park Avenue's unvexed current, the house-superintendent sat at his desk in a small office.

"Hello, Chief!" A voice saluted him from the doorway, causing him to look up, and, as he did so, to experience a slight shock.

The superintendent of a New York apartment-house specializes in types. He divides the sheep from the goats unerringly. This caller was a private detective—no doubt of it.

His glance had merely flicked over the stranger, but it had taken in every detail of his personality—the stocky figure, the expressionless moon-face, the dark business suit, the carefully cultivated unobtrusiveness of both manner and appearance. Somewhere far back in the superintendent's brain there was a glimmer of recollection.

His eye swept the card the man laid on his desk. The name, John Bell, meant nothing to him.

Following the trail of his obscure remembrance, his mind went back several years to the "old days," as he called them, when as the steward of a large restaurant he had, in his off hours, frequently yielded to a weakness for games of chance.

"John Bell?" he murmured, and then, as his subconscious brain supplied the link of recognition: "I remember you. You were on the district-attorney's staff. You're the fellow who used to play yid so as to get into the pool-rooms, scrunch down and pull your hat over your ears, and edge up to the doorkeeper and——"

John Bell, without a change in the gravity of his expression, had in a second gone through the transformation described.

"Meester!" He cringed at the superintendent's elbow, looking imploringly from under the rim of his dragged-down derby hat. "Meester! Plee-ase! I vant to place a bet."

The superintendent laughed heartily.

"The old trick!" He nodded reminiscently. "And you'd keep up such a buzzing that nine times out of ten the door-man would let you by. Sit down." He pushed forward a chair. Bell dropped into it and leaned back comfortably.

"Them was the happy days," he said.

"You took long chances." The superintendent looked at him thoughtfully; it required actual knowledge to picture this stolid, inconspicuous person taking any chances at all; mere imagination wouldn't compass it. "Yes; you took long chances, going into those places to get evidence."

"Oh, I don't know." There was a slight drawl in Bell's colorless voice. "Sports were sports then—everything according to Hoyle. Many's the ice-box door I've battered down in the eight years I was with Jerome; but the next day I'd meet the same boys on the street and 'twould be: 'Hello, Bill. You put one over on us last night, didn't you? Come in and have a cigar.' Nowadays I'd get bumped off in less than a week. This new crowd 'll pull anything on you. The old spirit's all gone."

"How come, I wonder?" At first the superintendent's manner had been a little abstracted, his thoughts restlessly and uncomfortably busy with the purpose of Bell's visit. Something to do with one of the tenants no doubt, and that meant unpleasantness, possibly publicity. But now, his interest roused, he settled down to enjoy a chat about the unregenerate days. "How come?"

"Hop-heads," answered Bell laconically; "that, and women mixing in. It's got so the skirts just about run the show. And they bar nothing. By the way"—he broke off abruptly—"what do you know about Mrs. Constance Lee?"

The superintendent, taken by surprise, could only gape at him.

"Mrs. Lee?" he stammered. "Good Lord, man! Naturally, I knew you were after a line on some of my tenants; but—Mrs. Lee! Why, you must be crazy!" Recovering, he looked at Bell with patronizing amusement and slowly shook his head.

"Some mistake. You may be looking up a Mrs. Lee, but not this one. I guess there are a good many of that name in Greater New York."

"I don't make mistakes." The detective's voice was crisp. "But there's no need to get upset. I'm not in the old line. Mercantile work's my specialty now—investigating parties that want charge-accounts and such like. You know how it is with those big firms—even with the best of bank-references and all that they want a little private dope on folks before they trust 'em too far."

"Well"—the superintendent looked relieved—"there's nothing to find out about my Mrs. Lee. She's the real thing." He suddenly squinted through the window into the hall. "Talk about angels—there she goes now!"

The detective bent forward, and as he gazed an odd change came over his face. His pale-blue eyes widened; his lips parted; his jaw dropped.

OUTSIDE it was a raw, murky day in late February. A chill, searching wind from the north had caused Bell to button his greatcoat and pull up the collar. The grass-plots up and down the center of the avenue were covered with tumbled heaps of grimy snow. And yet, as Constance Lee went by, it seemed to him for the moment that April was here.

She had stopped for a word with the door-man, and her face was turned toward the office so that he saw her fully. Beauty is always sure of its tribute, but hers was the loveliness that casts a spell over the most commonplace beholder.

The red gold of her hair gleamed under her small hat; her blue eyes held that final appeal to the heart of man, an enchainning touch of wistfulness, but there was spirit underlying that soft pensiveness—spirit and fire. Her face was as delicately fair as a white narcissus.

"Mrs. Constance Lee?" John Bell breathed. "Gosh! Why, that's only a girl!"

Automatically he noted the richness of her furs as she stepped quickly out to her little town car, the trim cut of her skirt, her hat, her shoes, her bearing.

"Class, too!" he muttered. "Class, every inch of her. And I thought she'd be a night-club vamp!"

"We don't have that kind here," said the superintendent witheringly. "You'll have to look for that over on the West Side."

Bell sat in silence. His thoughts, whatever they might be, were impossible to read. Finally he leaned over and tapped the superintendent on the knee.

"Chief, I'm in deep water. I'd better come clean with you. Question is: Are you open to doing a little business on the side?"

The other man eyed him reflectively.

"What's in it?"—bluntly.

"Well, maybe up to five hundred, if you can give me what I want."

"Hm. Pretty high for a credit-rating, ain't it?"

"Yes—for a credit-rating."

The superintendent again squinted his eyes at the ceiling and considered.

"I won't do anything to harm her," he said decisively.

"Truth never harmed anybody, did it? And that's what I'm after—the truth. No flimflam. All I ask of you is a straight answer to a few questions."

"Ye-es," the superintendent jeered cynically. "I see you slipping me five hundred for that. Like fun, you would!"

"On the level. I'm putting my cards right down on the table. Here—let me sketch you the layout. I'm with a big law firm down-town now—Kent, Hulsberg & Greeley; you've heard of them, of course. And we've got a client who's been black-mailed. He's put the matter in our hands, and we're out to get the bunch that stung him. Not the go-betweens—that part can be handled easy enough—but the man or woman higher up, the one who doped out the play and stacked the cards. And, Chief, every way we figure it, the only person who had the information used was—Mrs. Constance Lee."

The superintendent threw away his cigar.

"Nothing to it!"

"No? Then, how about this? There are two other rich men who have had the same game played on them. And in each case we find that they had talked not wisely but too well to Mrs. Lee."

"I don't care how many there were"—doggedly. "And what does that prove, anyhow? There's an old saying about telling a secret to a woman; she'll whisper it to her best friend, and the best friend to ten others, and so on in an endless chain.

No, sir; if there was any gouging done on the strength of something said to Mrs. Lee, I'll lay odds she wasn't in on it."

The detective gave a perplexed laugh.

"That's the way our client talked at first, too," he said. "Good Lord! What sort of a comether does the woman put over you all? Hulsberg finally got him to agree to an investigation of her; but I still believe he'd willingly kiss his money good-bye just to be certain that she is O. K. And he thinks more of a dollar than you or I do at that. There you have it"—he spread out his hands—"words and music. No reason why you shouldn't string in with me and get your bit of the plunder, is there? My word!"—impatiently. "If you're so dead sure the lady's all right, what's the harm in telling what you know?"

"Well, I wouldn't want to do anything to hurt her," the superintendent still harped.

"Hurt her?" Bell spoke testily. "Haven't I told you that she's under suspicion? Pretty grave suspicion, too. If we can establish her innocence, we'll be doing her a darned big favor, man. Not to mention the jack that's in it for yourself."

The superintendent's resolution gave way.

"All right, then. I don't like it; but—shoot!"

BELL consulted a note-book which he took from his pocket, and, flipping over the pages, read from a series of short-hand entries:

"Mrs. Constance Lee, age twenty to twenty-four, supposed to be American-born but has lived for some years in Europe. Represents herself as the widow of Captain Norman Lee, British army, who was killed near Cambrai, May, 1918. There is no available record of this alleged marriage, and no information obtainable regarding Mrs. Lee prior to her appearance in New York about November, 1920. So far as can be learned, she never discusses her past. Captain Lee had no resources beyond his pay and was heavily in debt. Mrs. Lee has no ostensible means of support, but lives at the rate of about fifty thousand a year and maintains a racing-stable which is known to be far from profitable. She makes large bank-deposits at irregular intervals, and these are invariably in cash. Is much admired by men, but seems to prefer those of middle age with solid wealth and social position. Mrs. Hugo Wendell acts as her social sponsor. Mrs. Lee is said to have an extremely magnetic personality and a way of attracting confidences without seeming to invite them. Her only business associates, so far as can be discovered, are her stable-manager, James DeVries, and her attorney, Louis K. Beachey, who has twice narrowly escaped disbarment."

The detective closed his note-book.

"Not so good, eh?" he drawled.

"Oh, I don't know." The superintendent's face was puckered, but he stood his ground. "Nothing there but a lot of question-marks."

"Let's see if we can't answer some of those questions-marks." Bell smiled. "To begin with, how did Mrs. Lee get in here?"

"She gave references, of course, both social and financial. We require that of everybody, and no tenant ever had any better—the National Trust Company and all sorts of prominent people."

"Yes; she could do that," assented the detective. "The crowd she trains with. And how long has she been with you?"

"Since last October. Came here from the Ritz and took a two years' lease."

"How much of an apartment has she?"

"Twelve rooms and four baths on the eighth floor."

"Select it herself?"

"No; her maid, Delia Clark, looked after all the preliminaries. Said she had been so long with Mrs. Lee that she knew exactly what would suit her."

"Hm. This Delia, I suppose, is one of those middle-aged battle-axes that you couldn't pry anything out of with a crow-bar."

"She is not. She's not much older than Mrs. Lee, if any. And if you think she can't talk, you ought to tackle her once when she's a bit stirred up."

"How many other servants are there?"

"Let's see. There's a butler and a cook and one—two maids. They were all taken on when Mrs. Lee moved in here. Delia was the only one who had been with her before."

"Who hired the others? Delia?"

"Probably."

"And how are they? Close-mouthed, keep to themselves?"

"Not that I've ever noticed," the superintendent said shortly. "Just about as gabby and fresh as most help nowadays. That is, all except the butler. He's a pompous crab—goes in and out without a word to anybody. He don't stay here at nights, you understand. Leaves about half-past nine or ten unless there's a party on."

Bell sat up and showed fresh interest.

"Oh, yes; I wanted to ask you about that. What about those parties—pretty gay, eh?"

The superintendent looked at him scornfully.

"Say; what do you think this is—a road-house? If you've got a picture of one of those movie blowouts where they throw confetti and roll the bones and go swimming in a fountain, forget it! Once or twice a week Mrs. Lee has a few friends in to dinner or bridge. Millionaires? Sure! But not all of them. And don't forget that those boys bring their own wives with them. It's all regular—regular as a church."

Bell tapped his teeth reflectively with the edge of his note-book.

"And yet," he observed significantly, "three of Mrs. Lee's guests have been separated from something like fifty thousand dollars apiece." He stood up. "I want to look over that twelve-room nest. What's the best way to manage it?"

The superintendent required some persuasion, but he finally agreed to introduce Bell as an electrical expert, making a general inspection of the wiring throughout the building. And, accordingly, the two presented themselves at Mrs. Lee's door.

BELL had come upon his errand with a theory already worked out in his mind. This had been slightly jostled by the impression he had received of Mrs. Lee. But, being an obstinate, tenacious man, he still clung to his original idea in the hope that it might be justified by other circumstances.

The servants in a ménage not perfectly correct are apt to reflect the atmosphere of the place, and he was quite prepared to find some old acquaintance of the crook-world masquerading as an employee.

It was therefore another shock to him to contemplate the impeccable figure that opened the door. This was an English butler—a butler, nothing more, nothing less. Then and there Bell definitely dismissed him from further consideration.

"May we come in and look over the wiring?" asked the superintendent. "There's a short circuit somewhere in the building, and we're trying to locate it."

The man hesitated and sent an uncertain glance back of him toward a door which stood slightly ajar. It opened, and a young woman in a maid's dress came out.

At the sight of her Bell recovered from his disappointment over the butler. This must be Delia Clark, and Delia, he decided

at once, was worth study. Yes; considerable study. A cryptogram not easy to read—the perfect maid, and something more.

"What is it, Dolby?" She spoke quietly and yet with obvious authority; then, recognizing the superintendent, she came forward.

The superintendent repeated his request, and in the moment it took him to do so her quick eyes had given his companion so comprehensive a survey that, as Bell expressed it afterward, he was sure she had counted all the prongs of his back-bone.

"Certainly." She stood aside to let them enter, and then conducted them from room to room. In each Bell went through the motions of examining the electric fixtures. He might have to come again on a similar pretext; what he wanted now was to get the "feel" of the place.

But again Mrs. Lee was upsetting his preconception. He had pictured a richly sensuous interior with curtained windows and dim, rose-shaded lights. There would be intimate, luxurious nooks, the ghost of cigarette smoke mingled with the fading sweetness of last night's roses.

But if a place can be said to have an air of candor, these rooms expressed it. There was beauty, but beauty achieved by simplicity. It was the environment of a woman of taste and cultivation.

In the kitchen he saw the cook, and discarded her with the butler from his calculations, also the two pretty, fresh-colored maids.

"I think the trouble must be in the library," he said. "I'll go back there and take another look."

THIS was certainly the room which Mrs. Lee most frequently used—large, with low bookcases round the walls, a wood fire burning on the hearth, tables with books and magazines, bowls of hyacinths and jonquils. But what interested him most was a capacious desk near a window.

As they returned hither, Delia in the lead, Bell gave the superintendent a nudge to signify that he wished to be left alone. The superintendent turned to Delia.

"You were telling me the other day about some difficulty with one of the radiators in the dining-room. Do you mind showing me what is wrong with it?"

Delia led him down the hall, apparently indifferent to the fact that Bell remained

behind. The detective's eyes were everywhere at once, looking for a possible dictograph. There were few places where one might be concealed. He lifted out a picture from the wall and peered behind it, examined the bookcases and ran his glance along the wainscoting and over the molding. No hidden wires—not a thing to excite suspicion.

Convinced of this, he turned his attention to the desk. A hurried scrutiny of the contents of its pigeonholes showed him nothing but household bills and receipts. The two drawers underneath were locked; but this did not delay him long. With a wire attached to his key-ring he deftly picked their locks and drew them open.

But again disappointment. The upper one held only a collection of old racing-scores, clippings of turf news and photographs of horses. In the lower was merely a batch of newspapers.

He rummaged under these, searching for letters or memoranda that might be of service to him, but there was nothing in the drawer except the newspapers.

Then as he started to straighten them out and cover up the traces of his intrusion, he struck the first semblance of a clue; for his eyes, trained to observe trifles, noted that the papers all bore the same heading and, as near as he could tell, ran in consecutive issues—a complete file for a month or so back of a country-town journal, the *Daily Star*, of Bainbridge, Kentucky.

But before he could investigate further he heard the voices of Delia and the superintendent in the hall, and precipitately closing and relocking the drawer, he darted to the other side of the room. He was testing one of the wall brackets when the two appeared.

"Trouble isn't on this floor, Chief," he announced. "We'll have to look for it lower down." And the two men took their leave.

Outside in the hall, Bell shook his head.

"You win," he said. "The man who could find anything suspicious there would see green in the American flag."

But even as he spoke his mind was busy with the question: What interest did the cosmopolitan Mrs. Lee have in Bainbridge, Kentucky, or any person there, that she should so carefully preserve a file of its little daily paper?

As Bell and his companion went down

in one elevator, Mrs. Lee passed them in another, going up. She stopped at the door for a word or two with the butler, and then came on into the library.

Delia Clark immediately and noiselessly appeared with a pair of house slippers in her hand, and, kneeling before Mrs. Lee's chair, began to unfasten her street shoes.

"Delia, I've gone against you and DeVries," she said gaily. "I've bought Joybells; he's my horse now. I closed with Freeman this morning."

Delia looked grimly resigned.

"It's not my place to say anything, but I can still think. DeVries'll be happy; they'll probably hold a celebration out at the stable."

Mrs. Lee's lips tightened.

"DeVries is going to do what I tell him. Joybells is an outcast, simply because he's never been understood. With proper handling he can be made the sensation of the year. If DeVries is too prejudiced to believe that, I'll get some one who will."

Delia said nothing, but, rising, gathered up her mistress's coat and furs and lifted the hat and gloves from the table. Mrs. Lee smiled mischievously at the girl's obvious dissatisfaction and dropped the subject.

"Oh, by the way," she went on, "Dolby says the superintendent has been here with an electrician. I hope there's nothing wrong with the lights."

"There's nothing wrong with the lights." Something in Delia's tone made Constance Lee raise her head and look at her.

"What do you mean?" she said quickly. Delia's mouth twisted.

"That man with the superintendent wasn't an electrician. He was looking for information."

"A detective?" The color had left Constance's face. "What did he want? Do you suppose some one has gathered a hint—pieced things together?"

Delia threw the wraps she was carrying on a couch and squared about.

"There's no one in the world smart enough to do that. Who could ever connect you, or me, either, with—" She stopped and, slipping to the door, glanced down the hall. "I've heard that walls have ears," she said, coming back. "Now, don't let this snooping flatfoot worry you. You have everything in your own hands."

Mrs. Lee had stood up; the color was returning to her face.

"You are a good bracer, Delia," she said gratefully. "And, as usual, perfectly right. But how do you suppose that man got the superintendent to bring him here?"

"Slipped him something, probably. Oh, that man was a detective, all right."

"What did he do after he got in?"

"Went through the house, pretending to look for defective wiring. I didn't want to seem to be watching him, so I let him have his head. There was nothing for him to find, anyhow."

"That is true." Mrs. Lee walked over to the desk and looked over it. "Everything seems to be just as I left it," she said. "You may be wrong about the whole thing, Delia; you are terribly suspicious. Anyhow, I am going to take your advice and not worry. Our rule has always been to meet things as they come. Did Mrs. Wendell call up? No? And no letters?"

"Nothing except your paper, ma'am."

"Oh, let me have it, please!"

She dropped into a chair and, tearing off the wrapper, unfolded the newspaper which the maid had brought her. It was a copy of the *Bainbridge Daily Star* of the day before.

SUDDENLY, as her eye ran over the chronicle of small-town happenings, she paused at an item:

Judge Clay Jeffries, famed throughout Kentucky as her most brilliant counselor, has been notified that the celebrated case of the Stony Creek Coal Corporation and Clay Jeffries *vs.* the Estate of Woodson Logan *et al.*, will be up for argument in the United States Supreme Court on June 16th. In anticipation of this, Judge Jeffries will leave for the East on Thursday to consult with his associates in the proceeding, and *en route* will stop off for a two weeks' stay at the Hotel Funchal, in Atlantic City."

She glanced up quickly, then, stepping across the room, called the office of her attorney on the telephone.

"Mr. Beachey," she said, when she had secured the connection, "I have news for you. I have just seen in that little paper I take—"

"One moment!" The lawyer, suave yet peremptory, interrupted her. "I understand perfectly. Don't discuss it further over the telephone. Suppose you come down to my office at once. Or, better still,

let me come to you. You are at home, are you not? I can be there in no time."

He was almost as good as his word. Twenty minutes later Dolby, at the library door, intoned, "Mr. Beachey!" But before he had finished the last syllable Beachey was smiling at Mrs. Lee from the hearth-rug. He moved so quickly, he was so spare, his clothes so somber in color that she had a momentary impression it was not a man standing there but a shadow that had dimmed the brightness of her room.

He bowed low and ceremoniously over her hand, and then threw back his narrow, iron-gray head. His fine, ascetic face was faintly tinged with color. His eyes, which he could make at will as dull and glassy as a lizard's, held, as he gazed at her, a burning glow in them a moment only; then he became again punctiliously professional, an embodiment of the law—the letter of the law—as formal and precise as the orderly rows of digests and reports on the shelves of his library, but, like them, it was said, concealing many a dark quirk and shift under his decorous exterior.

Mrs. Wendell, Constance Lee's most intimate friend, always called him "Old Treason, Stratagem and Spoils," and professed herself unable to understand how Constance dared trust him with her affairs. Possibly Mrs. Lee felt that as long as she herself was the object of his devotion, she had nothing to fear from his machinations. Possibly there was a bond between them which Mrs. Wendell did not suspect.

She handed him the newspaper, pointing out the item that had attracted her attention, and he read it through carefully twice.

"This is important," he said, with more animation than he usually showed. He sat gazing thoughtfully into the fire.

Presently he transferred his glance to her, and, as he did so, the little sardonic wrinkles about his mouth began to twitch.

"My dear lady, you look pale. Too many parties. You need change and rest. I prescribe a fortnight—in Atlantic City."

His first words were prophetic; for she grew pale indeed and shrank back.

"No!" She repudiated the suggestion. "Not I! You can send some one else. I will not go. Not after——"

He lifted his hand.

"Don't say it—even here. Never say the things you want to; it is always dan-

gerous. Has all my training gone for nothing?" He dropped his tone of half-bitter, half-tender jesting. "And as for Atlantic City, you are the only person to go. We can't afford to indulge in whims and fancies; this is business. It means a fortune to us. We've got to know certain things. No man can get them out of Jeffries. But you, my dear"—again the saturnine wrinkles creased his cheek—"why, I'll lay odds now that within two days all his secrets will be in your keeping."

She bit her lip, her face obdurately set.

"I will not go. Anyway, how do you expect me to meet him? I don't know who is or who is not in Atlantic City now, or whether we have any mutual friends."

"Bosh!" He shook his head at her. "That is your affair. You will have to manage it; for go you must, my dear."

Constance still protested vigorously, mutinously, but he overruled each fresh objection. Finally she consented to go.

"Better make your arrangements at once, then," he suggested. "You'll be on the ground first. So much the better."

She pressed a button, her face still overcast.

"Delia," she said, when the maid appeared, "we are going to Atlantic City for a fortnight. Have Dolby see about tickets for this afternoon, and telephone for hotel-reservations, will you? We shall go to the Hotel Funchal."

She did not remember until afterward—not until she was on the train—that she had failed to mention to Beachey the visit of the electrician who had roused Delia's suspicions.

That the man had been a detective seemed improbable. Delia was imaginative. Still, it might be just as well to let Beachey know. She would write to him that night.

ATLANTIC CITY! The name calls up a vision of a blue, sunlit ocean spreading its lace-edged mantle up a white crescent of wide, sandy beach; jutting, bedizened piers; an aeroplane skittering above the waves; the sails of fishing-boats out at sea; the board walk, like a stage five miles long, with its flat back drop of towering, gold-domed hotel-fronts, low, yellow-painted shacks and endless elbowing shop windows, and its holiday crowds forever passing—a play-boy atmosphere of

laughter and light-heartedness and damn-the-expense.

But February weather is capricious. As the six-twenty evening train pulled in across the marshes, it was snowing, and the damp, raw air of the drafty train-shed caused alighting passengers to draw their wraps together shiveringly and lose no time in getting to their conveyances.

The porters, as it happened, had all been seized upon by the time Mrs. Lee and her maid emerged from the parlor-car, and the two women picked up their suitcases and started down the platform.

But they had gone only a few steps when a sweeping gust of wind sent Constance staggering backward. It tore her fur coat open and flung her against a tall man.

"Sorry!" He swept off his hat with the exaggerated courtesy of a Southerner. His voice had the slurred softness of the blue-grass country. "A regular baby cyclone, isn't it?" he added pleasantly, and then, seeing that the two women were alone, "Let me help you." He relieved Delia of two encumbering bags and Constance of one before she could protest.

She thanked him as she drew her coat together.

"But there must be a porter somewhere." She glanced about her. "We are going to the Funchal, and—see!—its coach is almost at the end of the row"—pointing to the long line of signs indicating the cab-stations of the various hotels.

"I am going to the Funchal myself," he said, and, leading the way, he pushed on down the platform.

AS THEY reached the omnibus Mrs. Lee again murmured her thanks. The vehicle was already well filled, and in order to find seats she and Delia went forward, while he took a vacant place near the door. An electric bulb was just over his head, and the light fell clearly on his face as he lifted his hat and brushed back his hair. It was a little mannerism of his, and he was rarely conscious of it. Constance Lee was glancing idly over the other occupants of the omnibus, and his customary, absent-minded gesture caught her eye. Her gaze remained riveted on his face.

The coach started, and he looked at her again. But there was no answering glance. The gracious smile with which she had re-

warded his service was gone. Her face was set straight before her, the eyelids lowered. The dark fur of her coat, the startling vividness of her hair brought out the whiteness of her face. It seemed carved in marble, as cold as that of a statue.

Perplexed but fascinated, he could not keep his eyes from constantly straying to her; but throughout the short drive to the hotel she maintained that frozen repose.

When they stopped he loitered behind and managed to reach the hotel door at the same time that she did; but she passed him as if he had not been there.

The blood rushed to his face; he had a sudden tingling sense of anger and humiliation. It was not that he expected any further recognition of his courtesy; but they had exchanged a word or two as they made their way down the platform, and she had thanked him charmingly at the omnibus. If she now had given the slightest of bows, he would have asked nothing more. But this was as affronting as a direct cut. She seemed to convict him of an unwarranted presumption, which she rebuked with an icy hostility.

It caught him on the raw, and he followed slowly into the hotel, putting as much distance as possible between them, and insensible to the warmth and welcome that emanated from the Funchal's cheerful, red-carpeted lobbies.

As he approached the desk to register he saw that Mrs. Lee still lingered there, making some inquiries. He looked stiffly past her and spoke to a clerk.

"You have a reservation for me, I believe—Clay Jeffries, of Bainbridge, Kentucky?"

Mrs. Lee immediately closed her colloquy with the clerk and turned to the elevator.

Two or three minutes later she walked into the room where Delia was busy opening the luggage. Throwing aside her hat and coat, she moved to a mirror and stood studying her reflection with a minute and moody intensity.

"Delia," she said, "that man who helped us at the station—it was he! I suspected it when I saw him in the omnibus; but to make sure I waited at the desk and heard him give his name."

Delia looked at her incredulously.

"That man?" she questioned. "He's too young to have been a judge—how long back did you say—ten, eleven years ago?"

And, besides, our man isn't due to show up here until to-morrow. This must be just somebody of the same name—maybe a nephew or— But you are all of a tremble," she interrupted herself solicitously. "What is the matter with you? You mustn't let this upset you, honey"—putting an arm round her. "Come and lie down."

Constance shook herself free.

"It is the man himself," she declared impatiently. "Don't you think I know? He's not changed much. And he's not so young as he looks—thirty-five, anyway. They called him the 'boy judge.' Oh, I wonder"—her hands flew to her cheeks, and she turned to the glass again—"if he could possibly have recognized me. He kept looking at me, and looking."

Delia shook her head.

"I noticed that, too," she said dryly. "But it wasn't because he thought he knew you; it was because he thought he didn't. I've seen that look before."

SHE busied herself again with her unpacking, stopping from time to time to cast a thoughtful glance at Constance, who was sitting with her elbow on the dressing-table, her head laid dejectedly against her palm.

At last she tightened her lips, let some frocks fall from her arms to the floor and came over and stood beside her mistress.

"Buck up!" The roughness of her tone was softened by a note of pleading. "You never give in, you know. That's put you where you are. Look at it straight. He fell for you to-night—all in a heap—just like that. I had my eyes open. I saw it. You've got the chance you've been aiming for—maybe more than you've been aiming for. Got it without having to turn your hand over. He's good-looking, and you've told me he's rich and single. Why, think of it! You can take him or break him as you please."

If she had meant to rouse Mrs. Lee from her inert depression, she succeeded. Constance, flaming, surveyed her from immeasurable distances.

"Take him! Don't say, don't dream such a thing!" Her voice was husky with anger. Then she fell back in her chair and began to laugh hysterically. "Oh, what a fool you are, Delia—what a fool! Take him? Evidently you don't understand what it means out in Kentucky to be a

Jeffries of Beechlands. 'Victorian' doesn't express them. They are soaked, steeped, pickled in family pride. They would tell you, among other things, that their wives have to have as immaculate a pedigree as their race-horses. And what idea do you have of me? Take him? *Him?* Why, if he were to—" She left the vehement disclaimer unfinished. Her gust of anger had spent itself. "And yet what a retaliation!" she muttered. The gale shook the heavy window-casings, and Constance shivered. "Listen to that storm! No wonder I feel things to-night. Do you ever have premonitions, Delia? I can't breathe. I feel as if my arms were tied down, as if some net were slowly, surely tightening round me. Oh"—impatiently—"I can't give way to such nonsense! It's probably because I am tired and hungry. Order some dinner up here—will you?—and get me into something easy."

"You are staying in this evening?"

"Yes; I have some letters to write. A long one to Mr. Beachey, and some stable-instructions to DeVries. Also, I want to think."

"You say," she asked, as Delia, after telephoning the dinner-order, was helping her out of her traveling dress and into a long-sleeved Chinese coat of pale-blue silk, "that he seemed interested in me?"

"Interested!" Delia gave a short, derisive laugh. "Why, when you passed him up there at the door of the hotel, I almost felt sorry for the poor fish. He couldn't have looked worse if he'd been sentenced to be hanged."

Constance made no answer to this, but, dropping back into her chair, sat silent and abstracted, brooding darkly, while from outside came the heavy booming of the sea and the spatter of sleet against the windows.

"Delia," she began again abruptly and without preface, "there was a judge in England once of the same name, who on the slightest pretext condemned women to be burned and children to be beheaded; but, allowing for the difference in time, this Jeffries isn't much less ruthless." She was leaning forward, her clasped hands on her knees, looking far beyond the walls of the room. "And I'm going to be just as ruthless as he is!" The ring in her voice now was not of passion, but cold determination.

"I'm here for only one purpose—to get the better of him—and I'm not going to wince at the means I employ. I'll play whatever cards fall to my hand, and I'll be just as unfair and implacable as he is——"

A knock at the door interrupted her. It was the waiter, bringing up the dinner.

Jeffries, meanwhile, had gone to his room and, after a bath and donning fresh clothes, came down to dinner. Meals were served at the Funchal, he knew, only in the main dining-room; there was no grill. Consequently he had a reasonable expectation of seeing "her" again.

The clock had ticked away his resentment, and by the time he finished dressing he had exonerated her of intentional rudeness. It was merely natural and, under the circumstances, commendable reserve on her part. Of course a girl traveling alone would be on guard against the advances of an absolute stranger. There could be no other explanation of her coldness after the enchanting smile she had given him when he surrendered her luggage to the hotel porter. It simply meant that he must contrive some way of meeting her formally.

Eagerly he swept his eye over the big dining-room as he stood in the doorway. Among the diners there was no one who resembled her.

He took a table near the door, where he could keep an eye on whomsoever passed in or out. He ordered he hardly knew what. The cuisine of the Funchal is justly commended; but the food that was placed before him might have been chaff so far as he was concerned. He hurried through a course or two, then, waving aside the menu, loitered interminably over his coffee.

At last the doors of the dining-room were closed. No longer a chance that, hitherto overlooked, she might be among the thinning ranks of the diners. He rose and went out to prowls uneasily through the lounges. Finally, after exhausting all the possibilities of these, he became disgusted with himself and sternly decided to put the distracting unknown definitely out of his mind.

He was at Atlantic City for rest and amusement, not to moon about like a love-sick cub of twenty. Therefore he got his hat and coat and went out to join the merry-makers.

But the spirit of carnival was not abroad. The board walk was deserted.

He dropped into various resorts. The lights flared; the jazz bands brayed their noisy syncopations, but the mirrors reflected only vacant tables and idly yawning waiters. It was emphatically an off night.

Jeffries gave up his quest for diversion and went back to the hotel. Once more he sauntered through the public rooms, but with no success. He felt lonely and dispirited, irritated at his inability to exorcise her image. In the absence of any other interest she dominated his thoughts. Who was she? He had looked over the arrivals for the day on the hotel register, but was unable to pick her out.

The idea came that she might have gone somewhere for the evening. So, buying a magazine, he took a seat which commanded a view of the elevators and waited on.

A little string of guests arriving on a late train trickled in. One of them, a square-shouldered, moon-faced man in a black overcoat and derby hat, lingered at the desk to examine the names on the register. He ran his finger down the list and stopped, addressing a question to the clerk.

The clerk glanced across the room, and Jeffries, if he had been watching, would have seen him nod in his direction. The moon-faced man turned and bestowed on the Kentucky lawyer an intensive scrutiny and then disappeared into a telephone-booth.

But at the moment Jeffries' attention had been hopefully concentrated on some people who were coming in, and he missed the incident. Disappointed again, he gave up his futile vigil. The door-man had quit his station and was going about, turning off superfluous lights. Only one elevator was running.

So he went to his room to sit and smoke and dream of the most beautiful face in the world, while the breakers boomed outside and the wind roared a hoarse accompaniment.

YOU can get anything you want in New York, it is said, if you know where to go for it.

John Bell, constantly shopping for information, had various sources of supply mentally pigeonholed and card-indexed.



A sweeping gust of wind sent Constance staggering backward and flung her against a tall man.

After his visit to Mrs. Lee's apartment he had lost no time in securing from a friend of his in a clipping-bureau a number of recent copies of the little Kentucky paper he had found on file in her desk. But, although he went through these exhaustively, he could discover nothing that tended to explain her interest in the sheet or the community it represented.

While he was still puzzling over this, the superintendent of the apartment-house called him up to inform him that Mrs. Lee, accompanied by Delia, had left for Atlantic City and the Hotel Funchal.

This might, of course, mean nothing more than the whim of an idle woman seeking recreation and change of scene, but Bell, with a flash of that sixth sense on which detectives rely more than upon reason or deduction, was inclined to attach a deeper significance to the move. And, acting upon this intuition, he followed on a later train.

WHEN he scanned the hotel register he found, two or three lines below the name of Mrs. Lee, that of a man from Bainbridge, Kentucky. The town where the newspaper was published! The coincidence was too striking to be overlooked.

Logically, the next step was to get a line on this Clay Jeffries—to learn something about him and the nature of the link, if any, between him and Mrs. Lee.

A casual inquiry of the hotel clerk resulted in the identification of Jeffries as the lone sitter in the lobby.

Turning, Bell saw a tall, loose-jointed man with an air of both breeding and authority. He had an Indian profile, a thin, humorous mouth and piercing dark eyes. A wave of black hair was brushed back from his forehead.

"The kind that a he person could never fool, but that'd be a come-on for any woman if he happened to fall for her," the detective diagnosed shrewdly. "The only question is: whether he's worth the lady's while?"

But on that score the hotel clerk either could not or would not furnish any data.

"All I know about him is that." He pointed to the entry on the register, yawned and retired behind his screen.

Bell stared at the signature on the book.

"Clay Jeffries, Bainbridge, Kentucky," he read, and at the words one of the little

shutters of his mental switchboard clicked down. "Kentucky," he said to himself, "is populated almost entirely by cousins. Maybe that's the reason they call it the 'dark and bloody ground.' Scratch a genuine Kentuckian and you'll get a flow of genealogy that makes those 'begat' chapters in the Bible look like the efforts of an amateur. So the thing to do is to tap a colonel."

As it happened, Bell knew just the man to serve his purpose—a resident of New York for many years and the holder of a minor political job at the custom-house, but professionally Southern, even to the wearing of a graying goatee and boasting as his proud guerdon that he was a native of Lexington.

Late as it was, the detective called him up by long distance, and, as he had expected, succeeded in locating him at his club, pleasantly if unconstitutionally mellow.

"Do I know a Clay Jeffries, of Bainbridge?" He repeated Bell's question. "Judge Jeffries? Why, suh—"

"No, no!" Bell interrupted. "This is a young fellow. Probably you're thinking of his father or uncle."

"Father or uncle?" The colonel gave a thin, amused chuckle. "So you all think a man can't be a judge until he's gray-headed, eh? Let me tell you, suh, that the gentleman I refer to can't be over thirty-five."

"A tall, thin chap—might pass for Tecumseh if he were in moccasins and a blanket?"

"He, he! The Overton look."

"The Overton look?"

"Yes, suh. His mother, you must understand, was Millie Overton, which in a way makes him related to me, she being the daughter of William E. Overton, who was own second cousin to my maternal grandmother, Susan McDowell. I remember well the wedding of Millie Overton to Major Cash Jeffries— Hello! Hello! Are you still there? . . . Yes, suh; that boy has some of the best blood in Kentucky in his veins. And it tells, suh; it tells. He's a worthy scion of a noble line."

But Bell was less interested in the *sang azur* of Clay Jeffries than in more material considerations.

"That is very interesting, Colonel," he said patiently. "But how is he fixed?"

"You mean financially?"

"Certainly. Is it all ancestors with him, or is there anything to back it up?"

"The owner of Beechlands, suh? Why, that's patrimony enough in itself—the finest stock farm in the blue grass, the home of the famous Ben Adhem II of the past and of Bonny Bells to-day. And it came down to Clay absolutely unencumbered. Sholy, suh, if you know anything of racing you have heard of the Beechlands Stable?"

"Oh!" Bell drew a long breath. "Is this Jeffries the owner of that?"

"As I tell you. And that's only a part of it. Clay Jeffries, suh, is——"

"Here, I'm talking, central! Don't cut me off," pleaded Bell agonizedly. "Oh, hello, Colonel! Are you still there? You were saying?"

"That Judge Jeffries, suh, is not only by inheritance one of the wealthiest men in Kentucky but, in addition, I understand, has materially increased his fortune by his own efforts. Since retiring from the bench he has become perhaps the most prominent lawyer in the state. He has acquired in his own right all the disputed claims to the Stony Creek coal-region, and by advancing a new contention has succeeded in establishing a title up as far as the Supreme Court with almost a certainty of winning there. And that will mean millions for him—millions, suh. On top of all that he is being widely mentioned as a candidate for the United States Senate."

A few further inquiries, and Bell, closing the conversation, withdrew, satisfied, from the booth. Giving all due allowance for the exuberance of his informant, Clay Jeffries seemed a very likely subject for an adventuress to pick on—wealthy, ambitious and at the dangerous age—if Mrs. Constance Lee were an adventuress.

BY THE next morning there was a change in the weather, but it was a change for the worse. The snow had given way to a rain that pattered smartly on the board walk. Fog lay over a sullen, slaty ocean.

After breakfast Jeffries again took a seat near the elevators and dawdled over the morning paper, far more intent upon the ascending and descending cars than upon the news he was pretending to read. But the lifts took on and disgorged only squads of utterly unessential people. No flash of

red-gold hair illumined the dull grayness of his morning.

She had not been in the dining-room; there was little likelihood that she would venture out on such a day. Yet still he held his post—railing at his puerile folly even while he persisted in it. She couldn't stay immured forever.

If he had known that with Constance Lee there was equal speculation regarding him and that Delia had already been downstairs twice to reconnoiter and report upon his movements, if he had been aware that not only to the lovely lady of his thoughts but to an alert Sherlock Holmes as well he was an object of vital interest, he would have felt that life at the Funchal was offering him the worth of his money. But without this knowledge he couldn't flatter himself that a single soul in Atlantic City had bestowed a second look upon him.

To himself he was a castaway on strange shores, a human island entirely surrounded by loneliness. His bored gaze roamed over the other guests, and he decided that the Funchal must be a magnet for senility in decay and jaundiced invalids. And yet she, with all her radiance, was somewhere within those walls.

His distraught, querulous mood was so foreign to him that he did not know how to analyze or combat it. At home, although he had many friends and a Southerner's fondness for companionship, he was yet a hard worker, jealously guarding his time from encroachments. But here he was embarked on a holiday. He had put business and all thoughts of it away from him, and wanted to dance and sing and play with the children of men. Again his glance swept the dull, cataleptic company about him. If this were a holiday, give him drudgery and a funeral.

And what earthly use had it been to sweep and garnish his mind if it were going to be entered and possessed in this way by the image of a bright-haired girl who had unmercifully snubbed him?

After waiting another hour, his discontent and mortification mounting every moment, he impatiently got up and went out for a long tramp in the rain. By the time he returned he felt that he was once more the captain of his soul. He would stop pottering about in this desert, take the afternoon train to New York and the first boat to Bermuda,

and there in the sunshine enjoy his vacation.

At luncheon the waiter said to him, with a glance at the window,

"We'll have a bright afternoon, sir."

"Some time no doubt, but not to-day," Jeffries replied grumpily.

"Oh, yes, sir! The wind has changed. The sun will be out in less than an hour."

Jeffries mentally consigned the optimist to the spot destined for all amateur weather-prophets.

And then an electric shiver darted through his being. She was coming through the door, and with her—were there still miracles?—was Nannie Wendell, his own fifth cousin only three times removed. To master the emotions rioting within him he hastily bent his head over his plate.

He lifted his eyes and threw a casual glance over the room. They were not four tables from him, and Nannie was looking straight at him in delighted amazement, bobbing her head, smiling, signaling for him to come to her. He tried to be leisurely in his response, but his feet carried him faster than he intended.

Mrs. Wendell, not pretty, but vivacious, with inimitable "go" in her, stretched out both hands.

"Clay, old dear! What luck—and what a surprise! You haven't met Mrs. Lee, have you? Constance, this is my long-lost Kentucky cousin, Judge Jeffries."

Constance smiled as sweetly and frankly as when she had thanked him the night before. But that "Mrs." Ah! Bermuda was a certainty now.

"I have already met Judge Jeffries—in a way," she said. "He saved the lives of a lone widow and her orphan maid last night. We might have been swept out to sea if he hadn't rescued us from the howling blast."

A widow! Bermuda faded from his horizon.

"Really?" said Mrs. Wendell. "I've noticed, darling, that you always choose the time to be rescued when some awfully nice man is about." She had a funny, infectious laugh, and now she gurgled over her *riposte*. "But, seriously, Clay, this is the slickest thing that has happened to me in years. Constance telephoned me last night that she was here and begged me to come down. It sounded like a lark to me; so I left a note on my pincushion for Hugo—he's out of town—and caught the morning train."

"Sporting of her, wasn't it?" said Constance, "considering the weather."

"The weather is going to change!" cried Jeffries gaily. "I have a hot tip that this afternoon will be bright and fair."

And, as if to bear out his words, a pale burst of sunshine fell through the window at that moment to bring out the golden sparkles of her hair. He could not drag his eyes away from her.

"You, I suppose"—Nannie claimed his attention again—"are the tired business man here to recuperate."

"The tireddest business man you know," he declared. "Failing fast. Nothing can save me but woman's solicitude and tenderness."

Mrs. Wendell twinkled her eyes at him.

"If you talk that way you must have those coal-claims of yours practically sewed up," she said knowingly. "Only the opulent suffer from nervous breakdown. As if he were not rich enough already, Constance, he's trying to lay grasping hands on a lot of coal property that belongs by right to some humble tillers of the soil."

"Well, if it does, I am giving the other fellow every chance to prove it. The case comes up for decision before the Supreme Court in June."

He was again looking at Constance as he spoke. There was an odd glitter in her eyes. She rose.

"Let us go out on the board walk," she said. "The rain is over."

THEY left the dining-room, and Jeffries waited while the women got their wraps. He had felt old, and now he was young again. The sun was out; the unexpected had happened. He was going for a walk with Nannie Wendell and Constance Lee!

"Mr. Jeffries! Mr. Jeffries!"—the voice of a page.

He beckoned the boy, who approached, a telegram in his hand. Jeffries opened it, and as he read his face showed that it contained disquieting news. His racing-stable had sustained a calamity that might necessitate a change in his plans for the season. He studied the message, serious over its contents, and then crumpled the paper and thrust it in his pocket.

The elevator door opened and the two women came out, coated and hatted. He

smiled and flicked away the fly in his amber. He joined them, and they walked toward an ocean as blue as a sapphire under the clearing sky. The hotels were emptying upon the board walk. The sunshine was bringing out all the human butterflies, grubs, wasps and snails.

Mrs. Wendell, native Kentuckian that she was, began at once to talk horse. She recalled that for five successive seasons the Beechlands Stable had captured the Wide-awake Stakes, the classic for two-year-olds at Latonia.

"You have a candidate, Clay, this year of course?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, but without enthusiasm. "We always make it a point to show our colors in the Wide-awake. This year I have entered another Bonny Bells colt, Sleighbells, out of Fawnette."

"Why, that's the same breeding as Joybells!" Nannie exclaimed.

"Exactly!" Jeffries nodded. "They are full brothers, and as like as two peas—the same golden-chestnut color, the same aristocratic lines, the same dancing-step. The only difference is that Joybells has four white stockings and Sleighbells three. And this colt is rounding into the same sensational two-year-old form that Joybells showed. If anything, he'll be bigger and speedier. It looks like a case of history repeating itself." But he spoke glumly.

"Surely that's nothing to draw a long face over!" cried Nannie. "Most owners would be jumping out of their shoes at the prospect of duplicating Joybells' 1919 record. Seven wins out of eleven starts, wasn't it? Will you ever forget that afternoon at Saratoga, Clay, when he was left flat-footed at the post, and then sailed out and spread-eagled the entire field? Ah, there was a two-year-old!"

"Yes," he assented somberly; "and—one of the greatest disappointments of my life. Oh, well"—he shrugged his shoulders philosophically—"I am not the first owner to dream of having a world-beater, only to wake up and find he had a false alarm. With two-year-olds skim milk often masquerades as cream. The history of the turf is full of great youngsters who failed to carry on; although I must admit that Joybells rather tops the list."

Mrs. Lee began to laugh and glanced past Nannie Wendell at Jeffries. She looked like

a child up to some mischief, but she spoke demurely.

"Then you wouldn't recommend him as a purchase, Judge Jeffries?"

"I certainly would not!" he said. "The race-track term of 'dog' is the only thing that applies to him. My trainer, Ed Thornhill, used to swear that he'd heard him bark. Why, after Thornhill had done everything he knew how, Jim Shelby bought him, believing that the old rogue still had the making of a race-horse in him, only to get so swearing mad that in three months he sold him to the Elliott crowd. Since then he has changed stables so often I really couldn't tell who owns him now."

"That's easy," Mrs. Lee said audaciously. "I do."

"You?" Mrs. Wendell stopped short. "Constance, you're joking!"

"Not I. I bought him yesterday, just before I came down here."

"But why?" cried Nannie. "Simply to add to your feed-bills? Don't you know, you poor child, that Joybells hasn't been inside the money for three years? Of all the utterly fool things!"

Jeffries looked solicitous.

"I am afraid you've been imposed on, Mrs. Lee. Joybells would be dear at any price. Why did you do it?"

"Oh, call it a woman's intuition, faith in the strain, sentiment, perhaps," Constance said lightly, but her eyes had grown soft and pensive.

IN MEMORY she had gone back to a little red-haired girl in a ragged frock who, day after day, had crept to the fence on the other side of which was a big and reputedly vicious stallion. At last, daringly, she had climbed the rails and, indifferent to his snorts and pawings and menacing shakes of the head, had held out an apple and coaxed him until at last he had come up and condescended to take the apple and finally nuzzled his nose against her thin, little bare arm. Thereafter the two had been friends; for gameness always recognizes gameness, and a thoroughbred is loyal to those he loves.

"I always thought," she said, and there was a suspicion of a catch in her voice, "that old Bonny Bells was the greatest horse that ever lived."

Clay Jeffries swept off his hat and bowed

with the grace and deference of one of his Cavalier ancestors. She had quickened his admiration immeasurably.

"Thank you, Mrs. Lee. You don't know what that means to me."

"I would have you know that, in spite of this recent break of hers, Constance owns a very nice little string," said Nannie Wendell proudly. "She enters under the name of George Leigh. Her colors are scarlet and black, gold stars."

"Ah!"—with pleased interest. "I might have known—I think I did know subconsciously—that you were a horsewoman, Mrs. Lee."

"And let me tell you," Nannie went on, "I'm a sort of spiritual partner in her stable. Hugo won't let me be a financial one, but he can't prevent my rooting. Now, I ask you, Clay; can you imagine me married to a man who doesn't know a horse from a plesiosaurus and would rather look at a new motor than at the best Derby ever run. Well, such is the power of love."

"Love?" Jeffries scoffed. "A man who could make you care for him under such circumstances is using black art."

"But what would you say is the matter with Joybells, Judge Jeffries?" Constance reverted to the subject of her purchase.

Jeffries hesitated.

"He's like some men I know. They have breeding, education, every advantage in life. Often in their early years they show flashes of promise. But there's a soft spot in them. They just won't try. And as they grow older they try less and less. There's no particular harm in them—they're simply congenital dubs. And so they drift back to the ruck. That is Joybells, a horse that might have been another Man-o'-War, but now will never be anything better than a third-rate selling-plater."

She shook her head obstinately.

"They may be down, but they're never out," she quoted. "I believe he can come back. No one who has had him has ever understood him or used the right method."

"Who is your trainer?" he asked.

"DeVries."

"Oh!" His eyebrows went up. He seemed about to say something, but checked himself. "Well"—non-committally—"he has had plenty of experience. Let us hope that your faith in the Bonny Bells strain may be justified."

Nannie Wendell was always quick to grasp a situation. She quite understood that Jeffries, talking across her, had unconsciously relegated her to that minority of the third, which is trumpery when two are company. Her steps lagged. She put up her hand to cover a yawn, and came to a stop before a rolling-chair stand.

"This air makes me sleepy," she said. "I am going back to the hotel. Stay out, whether you want to or not, Connie; for if you come back with me we will talk, and I need rest."

She stepped into a waiting chair and rolled away, waving her hand back to them.

"I think," said Constance, "that I, too, would like to be wheeled along. It is deliciously mild, and my coat is heavy."

Jeffries felt that his last wish was gratified. He would be alone with her under a soft spring sky, beside a smiling ocean. He had nothing more to ask of fate.

"And only this morning I had decided to leave here," he said wonderingly, as they rolled along the hard-wood track. "I was planning to take the afternoon train for New York and the earliest boat to Bermuda."

"One is so apt to pursue a vacation," she said. "The things one requires of it always seem just ahead at the next place."

"I am quite content with Atlantic City now." It was a statement of fact and not a compliment. He did not look at her; his eyes were on the sea. He spoke laconically and without emotion. A man of great natural reserve and of judicial training, he could not tell her that it was the day of his life.

They drifted inconsequently from one topic to another. She let him take the lead, but she followed so easily and with such discrimination that he felt as if some inhibitory restraint had fallen away from him.

Mrs. Lee's responses seemed equally effortless, and he soon discovered that her beauty was only a small part of her equipment.

Plain, she would still have been a fascinating woman. She had a mind and knew how to use it. Her rich, full voice was like music. She possessed in a rare degree the subtle and entrancing quality of charm.

HE HAD just finished a succession of darky stories that sent her into fits of laughter when John Bell passed them in the

crowd. The detective walked on a few steps and then, turning about indifferently, fell in behind their chair. He did not appear to take the slightest notice of them. But he managed to overhear occasional snatches of their conversation.

"A fast worker, that little lady!" he mentally applauded her. "Darned if she hasn't got him hung up and out on the line already. She can have ironing-day tomorrow if she wants it."

When they reached the end of the narrow, polished track for the rolling chairs and Jeffries still directed his man to keep on, Bell reluctantly turned back. There were fewer people here, and his presence might more readily be noted. He did not want his face to become too familiar to them.

THE sun was setting now, and as they rolled slowly onward Constance pointed out the lovely lights on the water. Jeffries had slightly shifted his position in the chair and was leaning forward, his elbow on his knee, his chin in his hand. He was looking not at the ocean but at her, the lines of her profile, the poise of her head. And, becoming conscious of his steady gaze, she suddenly stiffened as she had in the omnibus the night before. Her face assumed something of the same marble-statue expression.

"Forgive me," he said confusedly. "I was staring at you unpardonably. I had what seemed a stirring of memory, an idea——"

With an involuntary shiver she drew her fur wrap closer about her to muffle the quick beating of her heart. He had recognized her, then! Or, at least, suspected.

For a moment panic seized her. But fear was something to which she never surrendered. Frightened the most, she dared the most.

Turning her face to his, she lifted it so that the evening light fell full upon it.

"An idea of what?" she asked, forcing herself to draw her breath evenly as she waited for his answer.

"That somewhere I had seen you before, and I was wondering where it could possibly have been."

"At some race-meeting perhaps," she said carelessly.

"No"—with an impatient shake of the head—"I could not have forgotten. And the suggestion, whatever it was, is gone

now." The mention of a race-meeting, though, recalled the telegram he had received at the hotel and he frowned. "I had some bad news just before you and Nannie came down-stairs," he confided. "Thornhill, my trainer, is out of it. He's really been a sick man for a good while, carrying on chiefly on his nerve, but at last he's had to give in and go to the hospital."

"Oh, how unfortunate! I understand how you must feel."

"Yes; aside from my sympathy for poor old Ed it hits me pretty hard. I don't know how I can fill his place—especially just at this season, for he's a master at schooling the young 'uns. Take Sleighbells, for instance; no one else could have brought that colt out as he has done. He seems to have a genius for dealing with that peculiar temperament that shows in all of Bonny Bells' get. I saw him give Sleighbells a work-out the day before I left home, and I felt, if anything is certain in racing, that we had the Wide-awake as good as won. Now"—his mouth twisted wryly—"it'll be something of a question."

"Don't be downhearted." She laid a hand on his arm. "Something tells me that this is a winning year for the Bonny Bells blood. I believe, in spite of all you say, that my poor, discredited Joybells will come back; you *must* believe that your trainerless colt will come on. Beechlands forever!"

Beechlands! Perhaps it was a telepathic reflection from her mind to his, but as she spoke a picture of his home rose before him. Beechlands in the waking spring, the gray-green mist of budding leaves against a pale sky and wild flowers starring the grass. He saw the old gray house set back upon its knoll, the lush pastures, the colts in the paddock. And to the picture imagination added the figure of Constance Lee, standing in the checkered sunshine, the rosy petals of blossoming fruit-trees falling about her.

Romance, always with him just around the corner, but gone when he tried to catch up with it, came near and touched him with a golden wand. He followed the leading with the heart of a boy.

"I wish"—the words came eagerly—"that you and Nannie would run out to my farm next month. You would like it, I'm sure. Somehow, you seem to belong down in Kentucky—I keep seeing you there. And the spring—it's beautiful! I'm crazy to

have you come; so crazy"—he laughed unsteadily—"that I'll probably go about declaiming for all the world to hear,

"Whenever a March wind sighs,
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes.

"And it would all be true." He looked at her. "You will come, won't you?"

HE RENEWED his invitation that evening at dinner, and Nannie Wendell immediately accepted it. Constance evaded a definite answer on the plea that it would necessitate a change in some of her arrangements. So Jeffries left the matter open until she could make a decision, and remained at the Funchal, according to his original plan. And Constance, having stayed over the end of the month, also lingered on.

February stepped back into the ranks of forgotten days. And March, belying his reputation, came on as a dreamer, not a blusterer. The sea basked lazily in the sunshine. The winds dropped their loud voices to a mannerly whispering. The ocean-front hotels were filled with seekers for the spring. Easter was at hand.

Among the gathering crowds, though not lost in them, was a man whose arrival at any resort from Palm Beach to Banff was always featured by the New York correspondents—Mr. Perry Gabriel.

Money is a magnet that inevitably draws the public eye. And Gabriel had money, a great deal of it—inherited, of course; otherwise he would not have possessed it.

At college he had been known as "Stringbean," and the nickname still clung to him. It so aptly expressed his physical and mental characteristics—his languid, attenuated length, his tendency to yellowness, his thin filament of back-bone, his coarseness of fiber and thick-skinned stubbornness.

The colonel to whom John Bell had telephoned for a condensed biography of Clay Jeffries had once at his club voiced his unexpurgated opinion of Gabriel to a group of members—and it was neither contradicted nor amended.

"He calls himself a sportsman. Him!" The gray goatee wagged indignantly. "Why, sir, there is no obligation on which that fellow would not welsh. Socially, he is a pest; ethically, a crook; intellectually, a

moron, and personally, a pup. All that his money can do for him is to surround him with a crowd of sycophants and permit him to gratify his vapid whims and petty revenges. He hasn't a third of one per cent. sporting-blood in him."

The colonel would not even have credited him with the one whole-hearted emotion Gabriel had ever known—his passion for Constance Lee. She had captured his imagination and stirred his sluggish heart; and her invariable discouragement of him, the indifference she never tried to conceal only strengthened his obstinate determination to win her.

In an effort to rouse her admiration for his finesse and daring he had boasted to her of certain business transactions which would not bear a legal investigation, and later, when this knowledge was used to extort money from him, he could think of no one else who could be in such entire possession of the facts.

It was the desire to verify these suspicions—suspicions he accepted one moment and scouted as incredible the next—as well as to protect himself from further blackmailing demands that had taken him to Kent, Hulsberg & Greeley. He was the firm's unnamed client of whom the detective had spoken in his talk with the apartment-house superintendent.

Yet, as Bell had soon divined, Gabriel was never quite certain whether he wanted his doubts of Mrs. Lee confirmed or not. He had set his heart on marrying her, and, in spite of his sense of injury, her fascination still persisted. Sometimes he would argue that he might use the proof of her guilt as a threat to coerce her; then he would realize fretfully the impossibility of bestowing his name upon an adventuress. So, torn by conflicting impulses—resentment, infatuation, fear and parsimony—he decided, on the advice of his lawyers, to leave the issue to the facts, to institute a searching but impartial investigation of the lady and abide by the result, whatever it might be. Accordingly, Bell had been detailed to the matter, with instructions to spare neither pains nor expense in getting at the truth.

But it was not in Gabriel's distrustful nature to give any agent a free hand or to leave him long unhampered. Not only the lure of Constance's presence there but a second and more exorbitant demand from the

blackmailers had brought him to Atlantic City, and shortly after his arrival he sent word to the detective that he wished to see him.

HE WAS not in an agreeable mood when Bell appeared, as he had just called up Mrs. Lee at her hotel and been told that she was out, and he longed for a victim on whom to vent his irritation.

"It seems to me, my man," he began at once, "that you're not accomplishing much here except to spend money." He picked up Bell's latest report and ran a captious eye over its various items. "Eight dollars a day, hotel bill! Pretty high living for a chap of your sort—what?"

Bell eyed him owlshly.

"If you want to shadow a party you have to go where your party does," he said. "And I understood from Mr. Hulsberg that this was to be a thorough job."

"It is I who am paying, not Hulsberg," Gabriel reminded him petulantly. "Couldn't you stop at a cheaper hotel?"

"No," said Bell. "Not, and get any results."

"Results?"—sneeringly. "I don't see that you've shown any as it is. About all I get from you is this staggering expense-account." He glanced down at the report again. "Aeroplane trip, twenty-five dollars. Now, what the devil was that for?"

"The party was taking a flight, and I thought at such close quarters I might pick up something."

"And did you?"

"No. The engine made too much noise to hear, even if anything had been said."

Gabriel scattered profanity on the air.

"Twenty-five dollars"—hoarsely. "Chuck-ed away! Just for you to fly round the sky and survey the landscape!" He called his valet. "Give me a cocktail, you!" he ordered.

It was characteristic of him that he did not offer one to the detective, or even a cigar. He gulped the drink down and again turned to Bell.

"Now, look here," he said hectoringly; "I'm not at all satisfied with the way things are going. I told Hulsberg that I'd stand for the cost of an investigation; but that doesn't mean that I'll let myself be played for a mark. I know how you grafters string a case along to keep a man paying, and I

won't stand for it. If you want to hold your place on my pay-roll you've got to show something."

"But suppose there is nothing to show," Bell returned quietly. "My instructions are to get the straight facts, remember. Suppose the lady is innocent?"

"Innocent?" Gabriel was on the edge of his chair, his eyes shining hopefully. "You got any proof of that? No?"—the peevish lines deepening in his face. "I thought so! You're just trying to work an alibi because you're too boneheaded or too lazy to find out anything. You've got to demonstrate that this leak came through some one else before I'll believe her innocent. The long and short of it is that you've been fooling round down here, blowing money like a boot-legger, and haven't done a damn thing."

"No." Bell was still placid. "I hardly think that is fair. As I wrote to you, I have made progress."

Gabriel made an exasperated gesture.

"That's a hot sketch to pull on a man like me! Never think you are going to get by with any glittering generalities of that sort here. Is this 'progress' of yours some more aeroplane flights at twenty-five dollars a throw—or what? I want to know."

"Well," said Bell reflectively, "to go into that I'll have to explain to some extent my theory of the case." He glanced toward the open door of the other room, where the valet was folding some clothes.

"Oh, he's all right." Gabriel nodded impatiently. "Just as well, though, to duck names."

"I understand. To begin, then, it seemed to me at the start a waste of time to try and get any evidence bearing directly on your affair. That would have been too well covered up, and the people concerned too strongly on guard. The chances were, however, that the party you suspected would be after other game, and my idea was to get onto any move of the sort and follow it up to the finish. Then, with the goods on her, we could force her to come clean in regard to your matter."

Gabriel's expression was more agreeable. This indirect, surreptitious method appealed to him.

"I searched the party's apartment," Bell went on, "and found in her desk a file of newspapers from a little town in another state, showing that she was keeping close

tab on some person or event in that place. I got some of the same papers, but, with no clue to guide me, I couldn't make anything of them. Then I learned that she and that maid of hers had left rather suddenly for Atlantic City. I followed at once, and found on the register of the Funchal the name of a man from the town where that newspaper is published.

"That looked like a lead—the more so when, on reading over the copies of the paper that I had, I found that this man was mentioned in almost every issue, and that his intention to come to Atlantic City had been announced and the name of the hotel where he was going to stop. And, by the way, Mrs.—our suspect, I mean—doesn't usually stop at the Funchal.

"Well, I looked up the man in question, and everything I learned only served to strengthen the theory that she is after him. He's a prominent citizen, all right, and, according to reports, worth the picking.

"But she didn't make a move that first night, nor the next morning, although he was hanging round, ready to be scooped in; and she must have known it, because I caught her maid, Delia, piping him off. I began to get puzzled. Then a thought struck me, and I decided to buzz the telephone operator. Sure enough; the party had sent a telephone-call the night before to Mrs. W., of New York—you know who I mean, I guess—begging the lady to come down and join her.

"Do you get the foxiness of that? She was going to be properly introduced, and by some one who definitely settled her social position."

"And did Nan— Did this Mrs. W. come?" asked Gabriel.

"She did. And the introduction was pulled, just as I expected. In fact, everything has gone along per schedule. The judge has fallen for her hard. They're together morning, noon and night, and by this time I imagine she must have the complete history of his life—probably including those little details that might be used to put the screws on him. There is no man, however straight, who wants all the little things he might confide to a woman exposed to the pitiless glare of publicity."

Gabriel looked at him quickly, as if he

suspected an insinuation in this. But the detective's round face was blandly innocent.

"Yes," Bell observed thoughtfully; "I guess the judge is elected—if that's her game."

"If?" repeated Gabriel harshly. "Of course that's her game! It's as plain as print. What did you mean by hinting round to me that she might be straight?"

"Well"—the detective rose—"if you don't mind taking a little stroll with me, maybe I can show you better than I can tell you."

CURIOSITY conquered Gabriel's momentary hesitation. He called for his cap, and the two set off together along the board walk—an odd pair. With Gabriel's weak, pointed face, and his long legs in tweed knickerbockers, he was grotesquely like a greyhound; while Bell, with his shorter figure and square jaw, padded beside him like a bulldog. They had covered about half a mile when Bell suddenly paused.

"There!" he said. "I saw the two of them starting for the inlet when I set out for your place, and I figured they'd just about be coming back."

Following the direction of the detective's glance, Gabriel saw Constance Lee with a tall man unknown to him at her side. The two had stopped and were leaning on the railing, looking out over the sea. There was in their manner something of intimacy, of understanding that stirred all the green devils of jealousy in Gabriel's nature.

"Isn't any question about where he stands," Bell remarked. "She's got him right. Only question is—and that's the 'if' I was speaking to you about—hasn't he got her, too? Looks to me like it might be wedding-bells."

At that moment Constance raised her head and looked up into Jeffries' face. And whether she were acting or not, Gabriel knew that she never had, never would look at him in just that way. His hand clamped down on his companion's arm. His face was crisscrossed with scowling lines.

"Listen to me!" he muttered thickly. "You get that woman. We'll drop this 'straight facts' business. Get her! Money's no object. Frame her if you have to, but—get her!"

This story becomes still more fascinatingly mysterious in the next instalment, which appears in
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Half White

Bitterness Is Always the Heritage of the Half-Breed. What Is There for Klahunt When She Realizes That She Is an Alien Both in the Indian Village and the White-Man's World?

By Barrett Willoughby

Illustration by D. C. Hutchison

AT THE edge of the creek that sprawled its way across the narrow beach to meet the tide, Klahunt was washing the red-calico dress of Shoogan, her aunt. Though it was summer in Alaska, the water was cold, and the girl suddenly anchored the garment with a stone and shook her small taper-fingered hands in the air to warm them. Her heart-shaped face with its clear olive skin might have passed for that of a white girl had not her black eyes, long-lashed and tilted beneath straight brows, marked her for a half-breed.

She glanced down half frowningly at the voluminous crimson dress. Air had found its way into the body, inflating it into a grotesque semblance of its owner, with whom Klahunt lived in the Indian village. The girl moved her head slowly as if in self-commiseration. She, who was of white blood, must wash the clothes thus like a squaw! She had been home from the mission six months now, but she had not yet been able to persuade Shoogan to buy a wash-board so that she might wash in the white-woman's way—the way she had been taught by the nuns during her seven years at the Catholic school.

She sighed as she bent to resume her task, but ere she had lifted the anchoring stone the shrill whistle of a cannery tug sounded. Down round the point, where lay the Chilkat cannery, it was time for the fish-boats to be bringing in their silver catch from the salmon-traps across the bay.

Klahunt never went to the dock to see them come in, as did the Indian girls, but no one knew better than she what went on there. Had she not watched, from her own little eyry up on the hillside nearly every day since the young Allan Bradford had arrived to take the place of the old cannery superintendent? Thinking of him now, her face lost its serious lines and her eyes grew soft with dreaming. Tall and slim and beautiful he was, with a face like the totem of St. John in the mission chapel, but his teeth flashed white when he smiled, and his hair in the sunshine, when the sea-wind stirred it, was copper and gold like the color on the hills in the month of the Little Moon before the snow begins to fly. Never in all her sixteen years had she seen a white man so beautiful. Some day, perhaps she might meet him as he came up the beach. Some day, perhaps this very afternoon, he might stop to talk to her.

Absorbed in her thoughts, Klahunt had not noticed the slouching figure of an Indian coming down the hillside trail. He paused a few feet from her and set a large, battered coffee-pot on the sand. He hooked both thumbs into his loose belt and, dropping his head slightly, fixed his heavy-lidded eyes on her face. A moment he looked at her, one eye bluish white and expressionless from trachoma, the other gleaming covetously. A faint, sinister smile twitched the corner of his mouth; then, in a high-pitched voice, he began to sing the Thlinget words:

"Oh, little sweetheart, come with me!
I am the strongest hunter of the northern sea.
I am the strongest hunter of the northern land.
I kill sea-otter.
I kill brown bear.
Many otter and bearskins I give to your people.
Then you will come to my village."

Klahunt leaped to her feet and faced him. "Indian dog!" She flung the words at him. "How dare you? How dare you sing to me the courting-song of the Thlingets? I am of the white people." She caught up the dripping red calico and started toward the Indian village. "Get out of my way!"

For answer, the Indian dropped his head still lower and defiantly chuckled.

"Oh, little sweet——"

The word ended in a snarl as Klahunt slashed him across the face with the wet garment. Simultaneously, his hand shot out. He grasped one of her arms, and, with a quick, ruthless movement, drew it behind her back and twisted it spasmodically as he forced her to her knees.

At each twist of her arm the cruel enjoyment in his dark eye deepened. The girl bit her lips to keep back her screams. Her body bent lower and lower toward the sand.

"Hah!" mocked the Indian, changing to broken English. "*You* a white 'ooman? Bah! You no white 'ooman. You my squaw. Hayeak's squaw. One hunner dollar me pay for you when salmon-run is over. You my squaw. Say you mine!" He gave her arm another wrench.

Klahunt's long black braids trailed the sand. Pain unbearable tore at her shoulder, and a low moan escaped her. Then suddenly there came the sound of running feet, and a white-man's voice shouted,

"Hayeak, you black devil, let go!"

Klahunt felt the Indian jerked away. She heard the impact of a blow and, as she sank forward, saw Hayeak measure his length near her. A moment later the white man was gently putting her aching arm in place. He lifted her to her feet as if she had been a child, and as he bent to brush the wet sand from her skirts, she found herself looking into the tanned face of the young cannery superintendent.

In her shy wonder that it should be he who had come to her aid she was, for a moment, deaf to his anxious inquiries; she was

even insensible to her pain. She was aware only of the blue of his kind eyes, the honey-color of his hair so near to her now.

"What's the matter, little Velvet Eyes?" she heard at last. "Is it possible that I've run across one of the sex who is dumb? No? All right, then. I'm going to take you down to the cannery doctor and have him see to that arm of yours." He glanced at the cautiously recovering Indian. "I'll attend to your case later on, Hayeak."

As Klahunt followed, she steadied the arm that hung helplessly from her aching shoulder, and looked back from time to time at the Indian. His actions filled her with a vague uneasiness. He had come to his feet. His long-fingered hands were clutching the air as he watched their departing figures, and Klahunt, understanding the strange maledictions that fell like clots from his lips, shivered. When they had passed beyond ear-shot, he caught up the battered coffee-pot, fastened his loose mouth over the spout and drank long. Well the girl knew the effect of that pale, fiery stuff the Indian brewed in his hidden still over the top of the hill.

FIVE minutes later they were approaching the cannery buildings where the old company doctor before his office door sat smoking a meditative pipe. At sight of them he called cheerily:

"Bless my soul, if it isn't the little Klahunt! *Wah see a too a tay?*"

The girl drew her chin up proudly. She had recovered herself now.

"I have tol' you many time, Doctair, do not speak the Indian to me. I am of white blood. My fathair was of the French people—white. I am for seven year in the mission and I pray to the White Virgin."

"My! My! So you do, Klahunt! Excuse me for forgetting again," apologized the doctor. "Come in now and tell me what's wrong."

It was Bradford who briefly explained.

While the doctor's pudgy fingers manipulated the strained arm and shoulder, Klahunt tried to forget the pain by listening to the words of the indignant old gentleman.

"Hayeak's raised no end of mischief among the Indians and the fishermen. Even if we antagonize the whole village, we'll have to put him out of business sooner or later. Now, my girl," he broke off, as he finished

his ministrations, "does that feel better?"

Klahunt raised grateful eyes and nodded, then turned with a shy smile to Bradford.

"It is good. I thank you both. I go now."

"Oh, no! Sit and talk to us a little," invited the doctor. "My daughter will be along in a little while. She came in from the States on the cannery steamer yesterday, Klahunt. She and Bradford here are *cheechacoos*. They're interested in anything we old-timers can tell them, you know."

The half-breed girl's heart warmed at the kindly look that included her with this medicine-man of the white people. She was proud of her white blood, proud of her brief education received at the overcrowded little Catholic mission. She had wept bitterly that spring when the nuns sent her home to her village. She had longed to stay and learn more of the white-man's ways, but there was not room at the school for all who came, and the older pupils must make way for the younger ones waiting their turn. Except for the nuns, Klahunt had seen no white women. Here, then, was her opportunity to meet one.

TEN minutes later she was sitting in the comfortable living-room back of the office, sipping a cup of tea the doctor had made. She forgot the pain in her shoulder and her shyness of Bradford as she watched her host's sputtering efforts to drink his too hot beverage. Her own tea she drank with surprising daintiness, for had not the nuns taught her one must make no noise while eating? At last, quite at her ease, she answered Bradford's careless, good-natured questions about her life in the village.

She looked about the room, with its magazine-pictures, its crude, home-made easy chairs, and the cheerily singing kettle on the big round stove that had come to the country as a gasoline-drum. To her, it was the epitome of comfort. Her dark eyes lighted.

"Oh, I love the ways of the white people!" she said, with a deep, slow breath.

"How about the village?" the doctor asked, as he poured another cup of tea. "Don't you like it any better than you did?"

The girl hesitated.

"Oh—maybe jus' a little," she answered in the quaintly accented English she had learned from the French nuns. "But at

first, when I am back from the mission, it seem very bad for me. I am orphan, and I live at the cabin of Shoogan. Shoogan she has had no white husban', like my mothair, so she wears the handkerchief on her head always, and she likes not to sit on the chair, but——"

The doctor's nod encouraged her to go on. She glanced from one to the other. Yes; they were interested, these men.

"But long ago, before I am born," she continued, "Shoogan is wife to Tin-es-koo, my mothair's brothair. Tin-es-koo is the *shaman*, the witch-doctor, so Shoogan is very wise in Indian magic, but not in the white-man's ways—*our* ways. I try, when I come back from the mission, to teach her the way of keeping the house as I learn it from the nuns, but Shoogan jus' laugh at me. I do not wish to sleep on the floor with her. But now Shoogan have made for me a little room in one corner of her cabin, and I have a bed and a shelf where I have put my little totem of the White Virgin that the nuns have give me and my beads of the rosary."

"Poor little devil!" muttered Bradford under his breath.

Unnoting, Klahunt went on:

"I am very glad for this little room. Many times Indian come to see Shoogan—Indian men with fierce eyes. I am afraid then. I go to my little room and lock my door until they are gone. Sometimes Hay-eak, the hooch-maker, come. Always he brings the whisky in the black coffee-pot, and then there is much fighting and singing and dancing. One time Hayeak stab his own brothair with the hunting-knife. They are all afraid. Then I come out and bind up the cut. The nuns have taught me much about these things. After that, Hayeak always want me to come out, but I do not. By and by he brings me ermine-skins, and the brown-bear skin for my bed—but I give them to Shoogan."

"And to-day, Klahunt?"

She told of the meeting and finished indignantly, angrily.

"Then he bend me down, down, until I am on my knees. He snarl like the wolf. He try to make me say I am his squaw—I who am of the white people! But I shut my teeth. I rather die. Instead, I say a prayer to the White Virgin. He twist again, and everything grow black. Then—my prayer

is answer, and Hayeak he is snatch away! And it is you, Mistair Bradfor', who are standing by me!" With a radiant smile Klahunt turned her shy eyes to Bradford.

Before either man could speak, a call sounded from without, and the doctor waddled out into his office.

With his going, shyness again fell upon the girl. She, who had been so talkative, became dumb when she found herself alone with the young man she wished to thank for the service he had rendered her. She was smitten with the feeling that perhaps she had already talked too much, had told something she should not have told—something that had made her ridiculous in the eyes of this tall, fair man. Perhaps even now he was secretly laughing at her.

With sudden suspicion she watched Bradford cross to the stove and strike a match on its roughened surface before applying the flame to his cigarette. What if he *were* laughing at her? A small panic came upon her. As Bradford turned from the stove to face her, she rose abruptly from her chair and, in Indian-like, stolid silence, went out into the office where the doctor was dispensing advice and medicine to a pale-faced Swedish fisherman.

A gay voice called from the beach,
"Hoo-hoo, dad!"

Klahunt glanced eagerly toward the doorway. An instant later her heart missed a beat. Within the portal stood the first white girl she had ever seen—a wonderful, laughing, white-clad girl, whose soft, thick hair glinted golden above the armful of buttercups she carried. Klahunt had not dreamed that mere hair and skin could be so beautiful. White and gold! White and gold! Like a litany, the words kept repeating themselves in her brain. Then she became aware that the doctor had crossed to her side and was speaking.

"Come here, Helen, and meet a real Alaskan. This little friend of mine is Klahunt Duval."

Klahunt went forward timidly and, with the teaching of the nuns in mind, held out a small brown hand. Helen, evidently unprepared, fumbled a moment with her flowers before she was able to clasp it with fingers from which she had no time to wipe the moisture. When the hand-clasp ended and Klahunt saw the white girl almost immediately dry her hand upon her handkerchief,

the real reason for the instinctive action never occurred to her. To the little half-breed, standing uncertain between the conventions of the white people as taught at the mission and the customs of her mother's sensitive race, it meant but one thing: This golden-haired one was too fastidious to endure the touch of her. In a moment exaggerated consciousness of inferior blood, even of a monstrous uncouthness overwhelmed Klahunt. She felt repulsed, belittled, cruelly hurt, and at the same time there was kindled in her heart an animosity toward the white girl.

As she stood, uncertain, Bradford sauntered into the office. Helen, with the freedom of an old friend, greeted him laughingly, familiarly, in a way utterly unknown to the mission-girl. At the sight, the blood leaped hotly in Klahunt's veins. This, then, was the shameless way of the white woman with a man! She knew her face was taking on the stolid, sulky look of the Indian when displeased. She knew, and hated herself that it should be so; yet she thrust out her little pointed chin and, without moving her body, deliberately, scornfully turned her face away from Helen.

An awkward silence fell upon the group.

"Good-by, Doctair. Good-by, Mistair Bradfor'," she said, and passed abruptly down the steps.

Like a slim, wild thing she sped up the beach toward the village. Once she stopped and looked down at an object in her path. It was the mate to the glove she had seen the white girl toss to a chair in the doctor's office. Savagely she ground her heel upon it, then paused and picked it up. It lay in her hand for a long, contemplative moment before she thrust it into the bosom of her dress and continued swiftly on her way.

FOUR weeks of sunny days slipped by—wonderful days of Alaskan summer when there is no night in the land. The tundra flowered into a riot of lavender, rose and gold, sweetening the air with fragrance; the hills clothed themselves in the white of Indian celery slashed by the scarlet and purple of columbine; the distant snow-peaks softened their faces with scarves of lavender mist caught up from the purple foothills. These were the stirring, fecund weeks when the sea-birds brought forth their young. It was the season of fulfilment—of



Helen accepted the flowers with a smile of thanks. Then she had continued her enthusiastic eulogy of some man named George, which recital Klahunt knew she had interrupted.

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quick-flowering romance, and Klahunt, for the first time in her sixteen years, felt the power of its spell. Never before had she been conscious of the summer's beauty. Never before had she felt the need of some one to share it with her.

Each day, after Shoogan had gone to the cannery to slime fish with the other squaws of the village, Klahunt roamed the hill-sides alone, gathering salmon-berries for the winter drying. Instinctively she avoided the Indian girls engaged in the same occupation. They were not of white blood like herself, and they had never been to the mission. They flaunted the most vivid finery the cannery store afforded, and, when Klahunt was near enough to hear, giggled and nudged one another as they whispered of their lovers, the white fishermen from the States who were so generous with money. She knew that in their eyes she was an object of scornful pity because no white lover sought her. Openly they derided her, jeering at her from behind the bushes, mocking her with exaggerated imitations of her own free-stepping gait—a gait inexpressibly funny to those who walked with the hip-slipping, pigeon-toed movement of the Tlingets.

One afternoon Klahunt stood in her cabin doorway watching the fishing-fleet headed in across the sun-jeweled bay. Already half a dozen Indian girls were on their way down the beach toward the cannery dock. As they passed, they glanced toward the cabin.

"Ah-a-a-a!" they laughed derisively. "*Shawut glatel* White 'ooman!"

Klahunt allowed her proud little face to show no sign that she either heard or saw them. Ever since her return from the mission she had gone her way alone and unheeding. Always at the back of her mind had been the vague but comforting consciousness that some day, somewhere, she surely was to take her place among the people of her father's race. It was only lately that misgiving had come upon her—only since her meeting with the golden-haired girl and Bradford. What if the white people did not want her?

DURING the four weeks that had gone by Klahunt had longed for further signs of friendliness on the part of the cannery superintendent. But, she thought

bitterly, he had no time now for any one but Helen Wagnall. Each day, from her eyry on the hillside, she had watched the two strolling together on the beach. Once, after the Indian girls had been unusually mocking, she had lowered her fierce pride and followed the couple with an offering she thought might be pleasing to the doctor's daughter. She found them sitting by the creek, and, hoping they might include her in their conversation, she wistfully held out an armful of snowy wild hyacinths.

Helen accepted the flowers with a smile of thanks, but waited somewhat impatiently until Bradford, in his kindly way, had inquired about the sprained shoulder. Then she had continued her enthusiastic eulogy of some man named George, which recital Klahunt knew she had interrupted.

Standing in her doorway now, the half-breed girl remembered this meeting with self-contempt. Her heart flamed with savage mortification. She was through forever with that golden-haired one who talked too much. She hated her. But Bradford—Perhaps, if it were not for Helen Wagnall, Bradford might walk with her, might laugh with her and share this new-found beauty of the world, for was she not the only other girl on the bay who had white blood—the only other girl who was educated? Perhaps, even now, if she knew what it was he cared for in women, she might win his notice. For days she had turned this question over in her mind, bringing to bear all the dangerous, too little knowledge she had gained at the mission. To-day she had decided what she must do.

The whistle of the cannery tug coming into the dock brought her back to this decision. She stepped into the cabin, caught up a small package and a pair of old binoculars that had belonged to her sailor father, and a moment later was walking rapidly down the beach toward the creek. She stopped at the place where Bradford, a month ago, had sent Hayeak sprawling. She lingered a moment, her dark eyes softening at her thoughts, then turned into the trail that led up the hillside to her eyry.

Midway she halted, for a turn in the path disclosed Hayeak coming toward her. She did not start as she had done a few weeks ago, before she was accustomed to his appearing without warning in her trail. She merely stepped aside and, with her little

chin scornfully raised, waited for him to pass.

He stood a moment, then set his battered coffee-pot on the ground.

"Yo ho, white 'ooman!" he jeered in Thlinget, thrusting his face nearer to her. "Wait! Wait! When the fishing-season passes and the white man goes south, then I'll pay Shoogan one hundred dollars for you, my little wild one."

His wide, blue-gummed smile sent a shiver through Klahunt's slender body, but she did not lower her head. The Indian laughed, resumed his burden and passed on down the trail, his mocking mirth growing fainter until it was no more.

Turning from the path, Klahunt forced her way through the short vegetation until she came out on a ledge. She placed the bundle carefully on the rocks and, adjusting the binoculars, settled herself to watch what went on at the cannery below—the unloading of the fish-boats at the cleaning-sheds, the countless screaming gulls that fought wildly over the heads of the fishermen, oblivious to every danger in their efforts to get at the offal under the sheds, the plodding trips of old Pete, the cannery horse, who drew the loads of cleaned salmon to the lines, where they were cut and canned. Finally, when the afternoon was nearly over, she came eagerly to her feet, tossed back her black braids and leaned forward with the glasses pressed again to her eyes. A group of men on the dock separated, and Allan Bradford emerged from the cleaning-sheds and started for the shore.

Perhaps, to-day, she thought, he might walk alone. Perhaps— But no! Bradford was joined at once by the white girl.

Klahunt's smile vanished, and the hand that held the field-glasses fell to her side. She turned from the scene below. It was thus every day—the girl met him, and he was glad.

With a movement of dejection she sank on the rocks beside the package. Her unseeing eyes, wistfully childlike for the moment, fixed themselves on the far horizon. White and gold, that doctor's daughter, while she, Klahunt, was—

With a sudden passionate gesture she stripped back the sleeves from her rounded arm and gazed contemptuously on the soft deep olive of her skin. There was a catch in her throat that ended in a muffled sob

as she clasped both knees with the offending arms and buried her face upon them.

The quiet swash of the sea came up from the beach below, and out over the bay well-fed gulls soared and tilted whitely against the blue of the sky. Their curiously muted calls and answers sounded like words. "White—and—gold. White—and—gold," they seemed to say.

For a hopeless, bitter moment Klahunt wished that she had no drop of white blood in her veins, that she were a squaw, as the other Thlinget girls were. They, at least, were happy. They, at least, had white lovers among the fishermen. Not only the fishermen—but she had heard whispers concerning the cannery superintendent whose place Bradford had taken. She saw herself as Bradford's squaw—for the summer—then swiftly put the thought from her. No! She was of white blood. She would be true to it. She would live in the white-man's way—the way the nuns at the mission had taught her.

THE memory of this teaching gave her fresh courage. There were ways, when one was white, of getting what one wanted. Many times at the mission had she seen it tried. She did not understand how it could be so; she only knew that it was. That stormy winter when the supply-boat failed to come in on time, did not the nuns make the novena, the nine days' prayer before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, and did not the steamer arrive on the ninth day? And the winter before, when the good old Father Lebeau was lost on the trail and it was feared that he had gone down under the ice of the Sywoo, did not the nine days' prayer to the Virgin bring him safely back?

With renewed hope Klahunt raised her head from her arm-clasped knees. Two gulls flew close to her ledge. "White—and—gold?" one seemed to ask. "White—and—gold," came the other's answer. Yes, Klahunt thought; that was what the fair young man wanted in his woman—white, skin and golden hair—those wonderful colors which belonged only to the people from the land down south. Now she knew what favor to ask of the White Virgin.

She came swiftly to her feet, and, catching up the bundle at her side, went back to the wall of rock that rose abruptly from the ledge. The unevenness of the formation

had resulted in a small niche with a natural shelf before it. On this she opened her package.

When she stepped aside the miniature grotto enshrined her greatest treasure—a small white-plaster image of the Virgin, at whose feet two tiny candles burned pale in the sunshine. Klahunt looked lovingly at her work. Up here no one could laugh at her, as Shoogan always laughed, when she prayed before this little totem of the Virgin. Up here she could make the novena undisturbed.

With a satisfied sigh she sank to her knees and made the sign of the cross.

"Mother of God," she prayed, lifting her great eyes to the image; "Mother of God, it has come to me that I love a man—a wonderful man of the white people. But the white girl, who likes not to touch my hand, I think she loves him, too. O Virgin Mary," she cried in sudden anguish, holding out her little brown hands, "I am lonely—I am lonely! I want to be white, too—all white! Give to me a skin like hers. Make my hair with lights of gold, so he will care for me!"

Her chin sank on her childish breast and there was a long silence. When she spoke again her voice was soft and coaxing, as if she pleaded with a human mother.

"See, White One! To you will I make the novena. For nine days will I come, bringing the flowers and saying my beads of the rosary. Nine days will I pray with all of my heart, and then—I look in my glass, and behold, Mother of God, you have heard me! You who did make the steamer come to the mission, you who did bring the Fathair Lebeau safe on the winter trail—you shall make me white and beautiful."

The pleading little voice died away, and Klahunt drew her rosary from her bosom. While she softly said her beads the lavender hills across the water outlined themselves ethereally against the sunset sky. The calls of home-going birds grew fainter. At last, even the lingering, opalescent tints faded from the sea, but the kneeling girl prayed on, oblivious to all save the white image on the rocky shelf above her.

EIGHT days of the novena went by. Each morning found Klahunt out on the hills, wandering higher and higher in search of the rarest flowers of the North

to lay on the altar of the Virgin. Each evening in her sanctuary above the sea she knelt confidently, telling her beads before her Lady of Hope.

Sometimes in her wanderings she met Hayeak. He never failed to taunt her with: "Wait! Wait! When the white man is gone south—" But Klahunt, secure in her faith, could laugh back at him now, for was not the Virgin going to make her all white?

On the ninth day, from far above timberline on the mountain, she brought the dainty blue-veined ice-flowers that cling along lingering patches of snow.

"They are like you, White One," she said happily, as she emptied her basket and massed the blooms about the feet of the image.

She placed a wrapped object carefully beneath the altar. Her mirror was one of her most prized possessions, and now for nine days she had not looked into it. But within the hour she should look, and then—her heart leaped at the thought—she should go singing down the trail to the young white man and greet him laughing, as had the doctor's daughter; for would not her skin be fair then, and her hair touched with gold?

Her quickly moving hands loosened the heavy braids that hung over her shoulders, and as she shook her head and knelt, her little figure was veiled in the lustrous darkness of her hair.

At this supreme moment it seemed to her that even the sounds of nature were strangely hushed, as if the North itself stood waiting to see the transformation of its child. Klahunt bowed her head reverently, and her fingers began to move bead by bead along her rosary. At the end she lifted her face, glowing-eyed, radiant with expectancy. Her blood throbbed in her throat. Her body trembled.

She reached forward, faltering even in her eagerness, and slowly drew the covering from the mirror.

It was fully a minute before the silence was riven by a quivering cry that broke into a sob, and the little half-breed crumpled down on the cold, dark stones.

When she raised her face and looked once more in the glass her black brows came together. Her eyes kindled. She sprang to her feet, and from high above her head brought the mirror down with all her strength against the altar of the Virgin.

"The prayers of the white people, they are not, then, for me!" she cried passionately. "You do not care! You do not hear! You do not answer, because I am—I am"—her voice broke with the bitterness that is the heritage of the half-breed—"I am only—half white."

She flung back the long hair that had fallen over her face and continued:

"For me, then, there are only the ways of the Indian—only the black magic of the North. False, white totem, know what I shall do—I who remember the witch-magic from Tin-es-koo, my uncle? This night shall I cast the evil on that doctor's girl who is so white and gold. This night, when the moon sinks on the Copper Bar, I shall creep to the burial-place of the Indian. I shall dig down into the grave of my mother—the squaw. I shall bury the glove of the white girl deep." Klahunt paused, her wild dark eyes fixed on the calm face of the Virgin. When she spoke again, it was slowly, malignantly. Her eyes were half closed; her upper lip lifted from her small, white teeth. "*As that glove rots away—rots little by little like the dead salmon in the still pool of the river when summer is done—just so shall her white skin grow hideous.* The witch-magic of my mother's people says this thing, and the witch-magic does not lie. As for you—" She hurled her rosary at the image, then leaped forward, caught it up and flung it savagely against the stones.

The body flew into a hundred pieces, but the head, fair and unmarred, lay beneath the altar, smiling its sad, compassionate smile as Klahunt fled, sobbing, down the trail.

The Indian village lay sleeping beneath the cold white stars that night as Klahunt's shawled figure slipped cautiously among the cabins along the beach. Once she stopped and faced the north, where the ghost-lights glowed and pulsed faintly above the distant peaks. They were abroad to-night—the spirits of the restless ones, she thought, as she lifted her face to the sky. A sudden age-old fear laid an icy finger on her heart. She beat her breast with her clenched hands and blew her breath out forcibly three times in the direction of the silver radiance. It was the Thlinget protection against the evil spirits lurking in the northern lights.

From the ridge behind the village the

call of a wolf, weird and thin and lonely, floated down to her through the dusk. Along the trail, tall, dried stalks of Indian celery creaked in the whispering air like bones of the dead in a witch-doctor's case. Kustaka, the Otter Man, murmured in the lapping waters; old gods breathed in the stirring rice-grass; spirits danced in the vapory twilight. Klahunt's very bones seemed dissolving in fear; the beating of her heart hurt her with its violence. Yet she could not turn back. Hers was the courage of hatred that forced her on and on toward the end of the trail, where the Indian graveyard huddled.

THE first storm of the autumn came—seven days of a wild September gale. Rain beat unceasingly against the window of Shoogan's cabin, and from the tide-flats across the bay wind-lashed waters piled in on the beach. Despite the storm, however, there were visitors at the cabin, and Klahunt heard that down at the fishermen's quarters, where the husky white brutes of the sea sat storm-bound in their cramped bunk-houses, wild drunken yells, maudlin songs and the click of poker-chips mingled with the roar of the tempest. She knew that Hayeak was reaping a harvest of silver down there. She knew his pockets were heavy with money, for he boasted of this at Shoogan's cabin, leering at her as he allowed the coins to run through his fingers.

Sometimes, when a gust of wind and rain beat against the trembling walls of the cabin, Klahunt's eyes involuntarily sought the empty shelf where the White Virgin had once stood. She would turn away again, reminding herself fiercely that she was through with the white-man's gods. Yet the thought of the shattered image—the image she had for seven years considered sacred—lying under the beating rain on the hillside, troubled her recurrently.

One day the visiting Indians whispered fearfully of two fishermen lying stiff and cold in their rough board coffins—white men who had drunk deeply of Hayeak's hooch and had killed each other with knives. They whispered, too, of Hayeak and the wrath of the young cannery superintendent; and later Klahunt came to know that Bradford and the doctor had found the Indian's hidden still on top of the hill and demolished it.

These days Klahunt sat squaw-fashion on the floor. Her heavy black hair hung in a single braid beneath the gay silk handkerchief tied beneath her chin. As she sat thus one afternoon, tying long brown strips of smoked salmon into bundles, she listened with unheeding ears to her aunt's placid monologue. Two weeks had passed since she had buried the white-girl's glove in her mother's grave. She shuddered, thinking of that night and what lay in the damp, shallow hole. Two weeks! By now the glove should have begun to mold. By now the white girl should show the first traces of the evil Klahunt had wished upon her. The thought brought a savage glow of pleasure to Klahunt's eyes, yet she shivered again, this time with self-loathing that was mingled with fear. She felt no remorse for the evil she was bringing on the doctor's daughter, but she was now, in the belief of her mother's people, a witch. She had committed the greatest crime in the Thlinget decalogue. She was a criminal such as those her uncle Tin-es-koo, the great shaman, had hunted to the death.

"Klahunt, my little one—" The voice of Shoogan broke in on her thoughts, telling again a tale of Tin-es-koo, the witch-doctor. "He was magnificent, thy uncle, when the great chiefs sent from afar so that he might point out the witches. See the great lodge! The sacred fire burning in the center! The seal-oil torches flickering on the silent, fearful faces of the tribe assembled! Hear the hollow 'boom-boom-boom' of the Thlinget drums growing softer, and softer until, suddenly into the firelight leaps Tin-es-koo. His naked body gleams through the strings of sacred bones and beads and knives. His eyes glow in his spirit-mask like the stars in the Hunting Moon. His long hair, woven with that of many dead women, flies like the storm-cloud. Oh, the dancing of Tin-es-koo, my little one! It was the slinking of the fox across the tundra. It was the speeding of the wolf with the running pack. It was the leaping of the king salmon, the lifting of the sea-gull—all these were in the dancing of thy uncle Tin-es-koo. From all these he drew the wisdom of the North. Then the drum-beats die, the fire burns low, and Tin-es-koo, with the magic hidden movements, makes the beads and the bones to whisper to him. He falls into the deep sleep and takes counsel of Yelk, the

Raven, of Kustaka, the Otter Man. They tell him the hidden things the Indian does not know.

"With his waking he swiftly leaps to his feet. His finger circles slowly—slowly—about the lodge, passing from one to another of our people. Then, with a shout like the boom of winter surf against a cliff, Tin-es-koo points out the witch, the secret one who has brought sickness to our people!"

Klahunt rose abruptly. She had no wish to hear again of the torture and disgrace and death that followed the detection of a witch. Did she not remember old Nuosk, the witch who brought the epidemic of measles on the Thlingets before she went to the mission? Had not her baby hands helped stone him as he was driven to the tide-flats and staked out when the water was low? At the memory, Klahunt's eyes widened in fear, seeing herself in his place, and the incoming tide closing above her own head—for she, too, was a witch.

She glanced enviously at the serene face of Shoogan. How simple, how peaceful life was for those who knew only the ways of the Indian! Again she wished passionately that she had no white blood in her veins—that she knew no other ways than those of the village. To get away from her thoughts, she tied the handkerchief more securely on her hair and stepped out of the cabin door into the autumn afternoon.

The sun, which had been shining an hour ago, was gone. The air was full of the stillness that precedes a storm. Afar off, great mauve clouds were piling up for their race across the sky. Out on the sullen gray-green bay, swiftly moving dark streaks spread under the first wild breaths of the coming gale.

ON THE beach, before Shoogan's cabin, she saw a dozen or more Indians gathered about a newly landed canoe. One bent and lifted the emaciated figure of a squaw in his arms. A scarlet blanket fluttered in the wind as he wrapped it about his burden. Klahunt remembered that they were to bring Itzoo back to the village to-day—Itzoo, who had been for years the squaw of the white trapper across the bay. Itzoo had the coughing sickness and had come home to die under the roof of her people. With sudden fierceness Klahunt

was glad that no Indian woman died in the cabin of a white if she could help it.

Forgetful of her former reserve, she ran down to the water's edge to offer assistance, but even in this solemn moment of welcoming one who was so soon to travel the spirit-trail, the other squaws drew away from her.

"*Shawnd glale!*" they jeered whisperingly. "White 'ooman!"

For the first time the words hurt her. With bowed head and stumbling feet she instinctively sought the trail that led up the hillside. A nameless longing swept her—a longing for a higher power than herself on which she might depend for comfort and guidance. Vainly she searched her memories of her mother's belief for some ray of comfort. Spirits, devils and witchcraft there were in plenty, but no kind, beneficent God with whom she might find forgiveness and a surcease from the wretchedness that was with her always now—a wretchedness and loneliness greater than she had ever known before. The blood of her mother cried out that she was that hated thing—a witch. The blood of her father whispered unceasingly that she had committed a sacrilege—she was a blasphemer. Her soul was lost, no matter where she turned. The young white man could never want her now, even though her skin were as white as the ice-flower and her hair as golden as the sunset.

The wind caught at her skirts and twisted them about her. A single drop of rain fell on her cheek. Suddenly she thought of the shattered Virgin lying exposed to the pelting rain of the last storm, and her rosary, blessed by the good Father Lebeau, rusting among the stones. Her seven years at the mission had instilled a superstitious reverence for these holy things, greater because she only vaguely understood their significance. It was in vain, she told herself, that these totems of the white people, were not for her now. Even as she did so she found herself drawing her shawl closer about her and starting swiftly up the hillside to her cry.

The wind increased. A strong scent of kelp wafted up from the sea and mingled with the pungent dampness of decaying autumn leaves. The red of high-bush cranberry danced wildly on bare branches, grazing her face as she sped. She came out, panting, on the ledge at last, and braced her fluttering little figure against the gale.

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Out on the white-capped bay the last of the fishing-fleet was racing in before the storm. Bradford and the doctor, she knew, had gone off on a trip that morning. They would be returning now with the fleet. The silver-salmon run was over, and the end of the week would see the cannery steamer, with the entire force aboard, sailing south. Bradford would soon be gone. All the white men would be gone. Hayeak would get her then, she thought dully.

THE first dash of rain was blown stingingly against her face as she turned her back on the sea and walked toward her shattered altar. The spattered white pieces of the image lay at her feet. Slowly she knelt, took the handkerchief from her head and placed the fragments of the Virgin in it. As she reached for the rusted rosary, a sudden torrent of rain descended in a shriek of wind that caused her to clutch at her fluttering shawl. In the lull that followed, her incredulous ear caught a sound—a faint cry of terror.

"Help! Help!"

It was a white-woman's voice. The light of understanding dawned in Klahunt's mind. Hayeak—the white girl! Hayeak's still had been up there.

Should she go? Deliberately Klahunt pondered the question. She hated Hayeak, but she hated the white girl more.

"Oh, help! Help!"

Again the anguished cry came drifting down on the storm. Klahunt's lip curled back. She remembered that *she* had not cried out when the Indian had bent her to the earth and nearly broken her arm. She, Klahunt, would rather die than call for help. But the weak white woman— Suddenly Klahunt wrapped her rosary about her wrist and started up the trail through the rising storm. She would go and see how weak this doctor's daughter could be. Perhaps she would laugh at her.

On the top of the hill she darted in and out under the low-growing stunted spruce trees that crowned the windy height. She knew that well back under the witchlike growth lay the remains of Hayeak's still. The wind, roaring through the low, gnarled branches, whipped her shawl from her as she searched among the débris of the wrecked still-house. No living thing met her eye.

Fear began to grow in her heart. She

held her breath, her frightened eyes sweeping the gray and dripping gloom beneath the trees about her. Perhaps, after all, it had not been a human call she had heard. Perhaps it had been a ghost-call. Perhaps, now that she had made herself a witch, she could hear these supernatural sounds. Then her glance fell upon a tiny path that brought back a childhood memory. That path led to the edge of the cliff that rose above her eery.

After venturing a short distance upon it she stopped, for a woman's hat lay at her feet—a hat she had often seen on the golden head of Helen Wagnall. Farther on lay a basket which the white girl used for gathering flowers, and in the path, trampled and crushed, was a mass of mountain-ash berries, evidently the object of the girl's afternoon ramble.

IN A moment all superstitious fear left Klahunt. She forged ahead against the wind-driven rain until the end of the trail came in sight. Then, despite herself, she gasped at the scene disclosed.

At the edge of the cliff, with her back against a gnarled, overhanging spruce, Helen Wagnall stood outlined against the beating rain. Her loosened, wet hair whipped about her face; her eyes were fixed in fascinated terror on the wild, gesticulating figure of Hayeak.

Klahunt saw that the swaying Indian was crazed with drink, his lawless nature inflamed beyond fear of God or man. Excited further by the sweep of the storm and secure in his fancied supremacy, he was indulging his love of torture to the utmost. Klahunt, her heart a cold, pitiless thing in her bosom, crept within ear-shot.

"You fadder—also dat Bradfor'—they smash my still—they t'row away my whisky. Dat Bradfor' he take my Klahunt. He knock me down in sand—me, Hayeak!" As if at the memory of his humiliation, Hayeak beat his breast.

At the sound of her own name Klahunt's brows came together. She started forward involuntarily, but checked herself. Hayeak's mood had changed. He had snatched his hunting-knife from its sheath and was waving it before the shrinking, terror-stricken girl. Lunging and laughing diabolically, he pantomimed the severing of her hair from her head.

"But now me fix 'im," he was saying. "Me take hair from white girl. Me make devil-charm—then Hayeak he is safe. By an' by me, Indian Hayeak, take white girl all same white fishermans take Indian girl. Me—" Klahunt saw his eager, clutching hands reaching out. She saw the white girl gaze frantically, despairingly about her and down over the edge of the cliff, heard the Indian's laugh of drunken glee. Hayeak's hand closed on Helen's golden hair. His knife gleamed in the rain. Then something cold and hard in the heart of Klahunt gave way. As the white-girl's terror-laden cry sounded again, she darted from her post and flung herself savagely upon the Indian's back.

With a snarl of surprise he loosened his hold on his victim and turned to grapple with the fury on his back. Klahunt, planning only to give Helen an opportunity to escape, dropped to the ground and was dashing away when her foot slipped. She fell headlong. In an instant Hayeak's arms were about her.

In the struggle that followed Klahunt knew that the Indian, blinded by rage and liquor, had lost all sense of direction. His insane desire to plunge his knife into something soft and yielding resulted in lungings that brought both of them ever nearer to the edge of the precipice. She was dimly aware that Helen had caught up a dead limb and was waiting a chance to deliver a blow in her defense. Then there came an instant when Hayeak, his back to the chasm, caught both her hands in one of his, and Klahunt felt herself helpless. At the moment the knife descended there was a tug on her skirts, she was pulled back from the edge of the cliff, and the sheen of steel above her ended in a glancing blow, a stinging, burning sensation in her shoulder. As she was jerked to safety, the Indian's foot slipped. He tottered for a second on the edge, then, with a hoarse, despairing cry, fell backward.

The two girls, clinging together, shivered as that terror-stricken cry pierced the gale, but ere it had died away another sound, an eager, anxious halloo, came from the woods behind them. Klahunt tried to turn, but reeled weakly and sank into the rain-drenched arms of her enemy. Her last vague memory was of solicitous voices, and the doctor and Bradford, in dripping oilskins, bending over her.

It was a weak and bandaged Klahunt who lay on the couch in the doctor's cheery living-room that night. The shaded night-lamp cast a faint pink glow on the table near her. The house was very still, for, with the exception of herself, its tired inmates had long been asleep. Klahunt was almost glad that the pain in her shoulder kept her awake. She wished to think over what had happened since Bradford had carried her down the hill trail that afternoon. She liked to recall the praise Helen had heaped upon her. She, Klahunt, had been very brave, they said. The white-and-gold one had knelt by her couch so close that Klahunt could look up into the great blue eyes that were misty with tears. And the doctor's girl had kissed Klahunt's brown hand—the hand she had once scorned to touch. The ways of the white woman were indeed strange!

Klahunt had not meant to help Helen and told her so, told of the hatred that had driven her up the hill to laugh at the weakness of her enemy under torture, of that something—not herself—that had acted when she flung herself on the Indian. Her rebellious heart scorned favors at their hands. But they still continued their praise of her. She thought surely they would hate her—she wanted them to hate her when she told them of her feeling for Bradford, her longing for companionship, the novena, the casting of the spell—but, instead, they all had listened, spellbound, to her. The white-and-gold one had even leaned forward and taken her hand.

"Oh, little Klahunt, forgive me!" Klahunt recalled the words, puzzled still by their meaning. "I did not dream you could feel so— Dad, Allan, we are not going to leave this child here this winter. I shall take her home with me, if she will come, and when I marry George she can look out for you, dad, until she finishes school. Yes, Klahunt"—the amazing Helen had finished, with a smile that made her blue eyes shine again—"in May I'm going to marry the nicest young doctor in the world, as Allan can tell you, for he's listened to my talk of him for weeks."

STRANGE indeed were the ways of this white girl who could marry another while the young Allan Bradford was near! A great content was born in the tempestuous

heart of little Klahunt. She stirred ever so slightly, and her hand came in contact with the rusted rosary that had slipped from her arm when they placed her on the couch. Her fingers tightened about it. After all, it was the Virgin, the Virgin she had broken, who had brought this joy to her—this new life where she might escape Hayeak and learn the wonderful things of the white people in that land down south. After all, the white man's ways were good ways—ways of peace. She did not understand them, but she would learn some day. And, then, when she had grown very wise, perhaps this Bradford—

The charred logs in the stove fell with a soft, crunching sound, and Klahunt brought her mind back from her dreaming. It was very late, and she was growing weary, but there was something else she must think of—something she must do. Into her waning consciousness it came—the memory of the glove she had buried in her mother's grave. True, Helen had laughed and said it could not matter, that glove. White people did not believe in witchcraft, but—before she left for the States she must take it from its hiding-place.

Her fingers were moving slowly on the cross of her rosary now, and mechanically her lips formed the words of the "Our Father." At the end, she crossed herself. Yes; she would keep forever in the ways of the white people. She would forget the ways of the Indian. Already she had forgotten them. She was at peace.

With drowsy content she turned her face toward the large, uncurtained window. The storm had died away as quickly as it came, and through the glass she could see the cold night, blue-spangled with stars. Afar in the north, above the Alaskan range, shone a silver radiance. As she looked, dim, pulsing streamers of amber and heliotrope, rose and emerald shot up behind the peaks and flung themselves in weird beauty across the sky. Klahunt caught her breath. The restless ones! They were abroad again tonight, leaping, crouching, flinging wide their spirit blankets. Perhaps they waited for Itzoo—Itzoo who was so soon to die. In sudden fear Klahunt's hand let go its hold on the rosary. Then swiftly she beat her breast with her clenched hand and blew out her breath three times toward the dancing heavens.



She sat by the window, and toward evening she saw the duke returning with his
gay cavalcade.

A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Perugian

No One To-day Recreates Historical Atmosphere so Alluringly as the Author of "Scaramouche" and "The Sea-Hawk." A Romance of Italy in the Days of Cesare Borgia

By Rafael Sabatini

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

THE secretary of State of the Seigniorship of Florence urged his mule across the bridge that spans the Misa, and drawing rein upon the threshold of the town of Sinigaglia, stood there at gaze. On his right, to westward, the sun was sinking to the distant hazy line of the Apennines, casting across the heaven an incendiary glow to blend with that of the flames that rose above the city.

The secretary hesitated. His nature was gentle and almost timid, as becomes a student and a man of thought, being in his own case in violent contrast to the ruthless directness of his theories. Scanning the scene before him with the wide-set, observant eyes that moved so deliberately in his astute, olive-tinted face, he wondered uneasily how things might have fared with Cesare Borgia. Uproar reached him, completing the tale of violence which was borne to his senses already by the sight of the flames. The uneasy guards at the gate who had watched him closely, mistrusting his hesitation, hailed him at last, demanding to know his business. He disclosed himself; whereupon they respectfully bade him pass.

Thus bidden, he conquered his hesitation, touched his mule with the spur and pushed on through the slush and snow that had accumulated about the gateway into the *borgo*, where he found a comparative calm,

past the market-place, which was deserted, and on toward the palace.

The clamor, he observed, came all from the eastern quarter of the town, which he knew—for he was a surprisingly well-informed gentleman, this Florentine—to be inhabited by the Venetian traders and the prosperous Jews. Hence he argued logically—for he was ever logical—that the main issue was decided and that the uproar was that of looting soldiery; and knowing, as he did, the rigor with which looting was forbidden to the followers of the Duke of Valentinois, the only sane conclusion seemed to him to be that the duke had been worsted in the encounter with his mutinous *condottieri*.

And yet, in his wisdom and in his knowledge of men, Messer Macchiavelli hesitated to accept such a conclusion, however much the facts might seem to thrust it upon him. He guessed something of Cesare Borgia's design in coming to Sinigaglia to make peace with the rebels and settle terms for the future. He knew that the duke had been prepared for treachery—that he had done no more than pretend to walk into a trap, having taken care first to make himself master of its springs. That, in spite of this, those springs should have snapped upon him, the secretary could not believe. And yet undoubtedly pillage was toward, and pillage was forbidden by the duke.

Marveling, then, Messer Macchiavelli rode on up the steep street toward the palace. Soon his progress was arrested. The narrow way was thronged and solid with humanity; a great mob surged before the palace. Upon one of its balconies in the distance he could faintly discern the figure of a man, and since this man was gesticulating, the secretary concluded that he was haranguing the multitude. Messer Macchiavelli leaned from the saddle to question a rustic on the outskirts of the mob.

"What is happening?" quoth he.

"The devil knows," answered the man addressed. "His Potency, the duke, with Messer Vitellozzo and some others, went into the palace two hours since. Then comes one of his captains—they say it was Messer da Corella—with soldiery, and they went down into the *borgo*, where, they say, they have fallen upon the troops of the Lord of Fermo, and the Lord of Fermo is in the palace, too, and it is New Year's day to-morrow. By the Madonna, an ugly beginning to the new year this, whatever may be happening! *Gesù Maria!* These be dread times, sir. They do say——"

Abruptly he checked his loquaciousness under the discomposingly fixed gaze of those somber, observant eyes. He examined his questioner more closely, noted his sable, clerkly garments heavily trimmed with fur, mistrusted instinctively that crafty, shaven face with its prominent cheek-bones, and bethought him that he were perhaps wiser not to make himself further the mouthpiece of popular rumor.

"But, then," he ended abruptly, "they say so much that I know not what they say."

The thin lines of Macchiavelli's lips lengthened slightly in a smile as he penetrated the reasons of the man's sudden reticence. He pressed for no further information, for, indeed, he needed no more than already he had received. If the duke's men under Corella had fallen upon Oliverotto da Fermo's troops, then his expectations had been realized, and Cesare Borgia, meeting treachery with treachery, had stricken down the mutinous *condottieri*.

A SUDDEN surge of the crowd drove the Florentine orator and the rustic apart. A roar rose from the throat of the multitude:

"*Duca! Duca!*"

Standing in his stirrups, Macchiavelli

beheld in the distance before the palace a glitter of arms and the fluttering of banderoles bearing the bull device of the House of Borgia. The lances formed into a double file, and this clove a way through that human press, coming rapidly down the street toward the secretary.

The crowd was flung violently back like water before the prow of a swift-sailing ship. Men stumbled against one another, and in a moment all was fierce clamor and seething anger; yet above it all rang the acclaiming shout:

"*Duca! Duca!*"

On came the glittering riders, jingling and clanking, and at their head, on a powerful black charger, rode a splendid figure, all steel from head to foot. His vizor was open, and the pale young face within was set and stern. The beautiful eyes looked neither to right nor left, taking no heed of the acclamations thundering all about him. Yet those eyes saw everything while seeming to see nothing. They saw the Florentine orator, and they kindled suddenly.

Macchiavelli swept off his bonnet and bowed to the very withers of his mule to salute the conqueror. The pale young face smiled almost with a certain conscious pride, for the duke was well pleased to have, as it were, the very eyes of Florence upon him in such a moment. He drew rein on a level with the envoy.

"*Olà, Ser Nicold!*" he called.

The lances cleared a path speedily, and Messer Macchiavelli walked his mule forward in answer to that summons.

"It is done," the duke announced. "I have fulfilled no less than I promised. What it was I promised you will now understand. I made my opportunity, and, having made it, I employed it—so well that I hold them fast—Vitelli, Oliverotto, Gravina and Giangiordano's bastard. The other Orsini, Gianpaolo Baglioni and Petrucci will follow. My net is wide-flung, and to the last man they shall pay the price of treachery."

He paused, waiting for words that should tell him not what opinion might be Messer Macchiavelli's own but what reception such news was likely to receive in Florence. The secretary, however, had all the caution of the astute. His face remained inscrutable. He bowed in silence.

A frown flickered between the splendid eyes that were considering him.

"I have done a very great service to your masters, the Seignior of Florence," the duke said, almost in a tone of challenge.

"The Seignior shall be informed, Magnificent," was the orator's evasive answer, "and I shall wait the honor of conveying to your Potency the Seignior's felicitations."

"Much has been done," the duke resumed. "But much is yet to do, and who shall tell me what?" He looked at Macchiavelli, and his eyes invited counsel.

"Does your Potency ask me?"

"Indeed," said the duke.

"For theory?"

The duke stared, then laughed.

"For theory," he said. "The practise you can leave to me."

Macchiavelli's eyes narrowed.

"When I speak of theory," he explained, "I mean an opinion personal to myself—not a pronouncement of the Florentine secretary." He leaned a little nearer. "When a prince has enemies," he said quietly, "he must deal with them in one of two ways: he must either convert them into friends or put it beyond their power to continue his enemies."

The duke smiled slowly.

"Where learned you that?" he asked.

"I have watched with admiration your Potency's rise to greatness."

"And you have melted down my actions into maxims to govern my future?"

"More, Magnificent—to govern all future princes."

The duke looked squarely into that sallow, astute face.

"I sometimes wonder which you are—courtier or philosopher," he said. "But your advice is timely—either make them my friends or put it beyond their power to continue my enemies. I could not again trust them as my friends. You will see that. Therefore—" He broke off. "But we will talk of this again when I return. Corella's troops have got out of hand; they are burning and looting in the *borgo*, and I go to set a term to it, or else peddling Venice will be in arms to recover the ducats plundered from her shopkeepers. You will find entertainment in the palace. Await me there."

He made a sign to his lances, wheeled, and rode on briskly about his task, while Macchiavelli went off in the opposite direction, through the lane opened out for him very readily in the crowd, since all had seen

that he was one who enjoyed the exalted honor of the duke's acquaintance.

The Florentine made his way to the palace, as he had been bidden, and thence he indited his famous letter to the Seignior of Florence, in which he announced these happenings to his masters. He informed them of the manner adopted by Cesare Borgia to turn the tables upon those who had not kept faith with him; he told them how his master-stroke had resulted in the seizure of the three Orsini, of Vitellozzo Vitelli and Oliverotto, Lord of Fermo, and he concluded, "I greatly doubt if any of them will be alive by morning."

Anon he was to realize that, for all his penetration, he had failed to plumb to its full depth the craft and guile of Cesare Borgia. So astute an observer should have perceived that to have wrung the necks of the Orsini out of hand would have been to spread consternation and alarm in the lair of the bear in Rome, and that, being alarmed, the powerful Cardinal Orsini, his brother Giulio and his nephew Matteo—with whom we are more particularly concerned—might seek safety in flight, and in that safety concert reprisals.

Macchiavelli's failure to foresee the course which such considerations must dictate to Cesare is another proof of how much the duke was the Florentine's master in statecraft.

THE Lords of Fermo and Castello were dealt with as Macchiavelli expected. They were formally judged, found guilty of treason against their overlord, and strangled that same night—back to back, with the same rope, it is said—in the Palace of the Prefecture of Sinigaglia, whereafter their bodies were ceremoniously borne to the Misericordia Hospital. But the Orsini did not share just yet the fate of their fellow traitors. They were accorded another ten days of life, until, that is, Cesare had received advices from Rome that the Cardinal Orsini and the rest of the Orsini brood were safely captured. Thereupon at Assisi—whither the duke had removed himself by then—Gravina and Paolo Orsini were delivered over to the strangler.

The duke's net had been wide-flung, as he told Macchiavelli on that evening in Sinigaglia. Yet four there were who had escaped its meshes: Gianpaolo Baglioni, prevented

from waiting upon the duke in Sinigaglia by an illness which had proved less fatal to him than had their health to his associates; Pandolfo Petrucci, Tyrant of Siena—the only one of them all who seems to have had the wit to mistrust the duke's intentions—who had come armed at all points, had taken refuge behind the ramparts of his city, there to wait upon events; Fabio Orsini, who had gone after Petrucci, and Matteo Orsini, the latter's cousin and the cardinal's nephew, who had vanished no man knew whither.

The duke set himself the task of hunting down the first three, whose whereabouts were known to him. Matteo mattered less, and could be left until later.

"But I swear to God," Cesare informed Fra Serafino, the Minorite friar who discharged the functions of secretary in the absence of the moon-faced Agabito; "I swear to God that there is no hole in Italy into which I shall not pursue him!"

This was at Assisi, on the very day that he ordered the strangling of Gravina and Giangiordano's bastard. On that same evening came one of his spies with information that Matteo Orsini was in hiding at Pievano, the castle of his distant kinsman Almerico—an Orsini, this last, too aged and too inactive to be worthy the duke's attention, a studious man, living almost in seclusion with his books and his daughter.

The duke was housed in the Rocca Maggiore, that gray-embattled fortress crowning the steep hill above the city, and from the height of its scarred and rugged slopes dominating the Umbrian plain. He received the messenger in a vast stone-flagged chamber that was very bare and chill. A great fire roared in the cavernous fireplace. Yet the duke, pacing thoughtfully back and forth while the messenger related what he had discovered, was tightly wrapped for greater warmth in a scarlet mantle lined with lynx fur. Fra Serafino occupied an oaken writing-pulpit near one of the windows, and sat cutting a quill, apparently lost in his task, yet missing no word of what was being said.

The messenger was intelligent, and he had been diligent. Not content with learning that Matteo Orsini was believed to be at Pievano, he had scoured the *borgo* for scraps of gossip, anticipating out of his own knowledge the very question which the duke

now asked him—though not directly—and seeing to it that he came equipped with a ready answer.

"This, then, is mere gossip," Cesare sneered. "'It is said' that Matteo Orsini is at Pievano. I am sick to death of 'It is said,' and all his family. I have known him long and never found him other than a liar."

"But the tale, may it please your Potency, has its probabilities," said the messenger.

The duke halted in his pacing. He threw back his tawny young head, and his lovely eyes lost their dreamy thoughtfulness as they fastened now upon the messenger.

"Probabilities?" said he. "Discover them!"

The messenger was prepared to do so.

"The Count Almerico has a daughter," he said promptly. "It is the common talk of Pievano that this lady—Madonna Fulvia, she is called—and Ser Matteo are to be married. The kinship between them is none so close as to forbid it. The old count approves, loving Ser Matteo as a son. And so, where else in Italy should Ser Matteo be safer than with those who love him? Then, too, Pievano is remote, its lord is a man of books, taking no part in worldly turbulence. Therefore, Pievano, being of all places the last in which one would think of looking for Ser Matteo, is the likeliest to which he would run for shelter."

The duke considered the fellow in silence for a moment, weighing what he said.

"You reason well," he admitted at length, and the messenger bowed himself double. "You have leave to go. Bid them tell Messer da Corella to attend me."

THE man bowed again, stepped softly to the door and vanished. As the heavy curtain quivered to rest, Cesare sauntered across to one of the windows and stared out upon the bleak landscape stretching for miles before him in the cold light of that January afternoon. Above the distant blue-gray mass of the Apennines, the brooding sky was slashed with gold. The river Chiagi, winding its way to the Tiber, lay like a silver ribbon upon the dull-green plain. Cesare stared before him a while, seeing nothing of all this. Then abruptly he turned to Fra Serafino, who was now testing the quill he had cut.

"What is to be done to take this fellow?" he asked.

It was his way to seek advice of all men, yet never following any but such as jumped with his own wishes.

The gaunt-faced monk looked up, almost startled by the suddenness of the question. Knowing the duke's way, and knowing that Corella had been sent for, Fra Serafino put two and two together and presented the duke with what he conceived to be the total sum.

"Send ten lances to fetch him from Pievano," he replied.

"Ten lances—fifty men— Hm. And if Pievano were to resist?"

"Send another twenty lances and a gun," said Serafino.

The duke considered him, smiling faintly.

"You prove to me that you know nothing of Pievano, and still less of men, Fra Serafino. I wonder do you know anything of women?"

"God forbid!" ejaculated the monk, utterly scandalized.

"Then are you worthless as a counselor in this," was the duke's conclusion. "I had hoped you could have imagined yourself a woman for a moment."

"Imagine myself a woman?" quoth Fra Serafino, his deep-set eyes staring.

"That you might tell me what manner of man would be likeliest to delude you. You see, Pievano is a rabbit-warren. You might conceal an army there—how much more easily a single man. And I do not intend to alarm the Count Almerico into sending to earth a guest whom we are not absolutely sure that he is harboring. You see the difficulty, I trust. To resolve it, I shall need a man of little heart and less conscience—a scoundrel who is swayed by nothing but his own ambition, who cares for nothing but his own advancement. And it is an inevitable condition that he should be of an exterior that is pleasing to a woman and likely to command her confidence. Now, where shall I find me such a paragon?"

But Fra Serafino had no answer. He was lost in an amazed consideration of the crooked underground ways by which Cesare burrowed to his ends. And then Corella clanked in, booted, bearded, stalwart and stiff, the very type of the *condottiero*.

The duke turned and considered him in silence. In the end he shook his head.

"No," he said; "you are not the man. You are too much the soldier, too little the courtier, too much the swordsman, too little the lute player, and I think that you are almost ugly. If you were a woman, Fra Serafino, should you not consider him an ugly fellow?"

"I am not a woman, Magnificent——"

"That is all too evident," the duke deplored.

"And I do not know what I should think if I were a woman. Probably I should not think at all, for I do not believe that women think."

"Misogynist," said the duke.

"God be thanked!" said Fra Serafino.

The duke returned to the consideration of his captain.

"No," he said again; "the essence of success is to choose the right tools for the work in hand, and you are not the tool for this, Michele. I want a handsome, greedy, unscrupulous scoundrel, who can both ply a sword and lisp a sonnet. Where shall I find one answering that description?"

"What is the task, Magnificent?" ventured Corella.

"I'll tell that to the man I send to do it when I have found him. Is Ramirez here?" he asked suddenly.

"He is at Urbino, my lord," Corella answered. "But there is Pantaleone degli Uberti, who seems in some way such a man as you describe."

The duke considered.

"Send him hither," he said shortly, and Corella bowed stiffly and departed.

CESARE paced slowly back to the fire and stood warming himself until Pantaleone came—a tall, handsome fellow, this, with sleek black hair and bold black eyes, martial at once in bearing and in apparel, yet with a certain foppishness not unbecoming to his youth. The interview was short.

"From information that I have received," said Cesare, "I will wager a thousand ducats to a horseshoe that Matteo Orsini is with his uncle at Pievano. I offer that thousand ducats for his head. Go and earn it."

Pantaleone was taken aback. He blinked his bold black eyes.

"What men shall I take?" he stammered.

"What men you please. But understand the thing is not to be done by force. At the first show of it, Matteo, if he is there, will

go to earth like a mole, and not all your questing shall discover him. This is an affair for wits, not lances. There is a woman at Pievano who loves Matteo, or whom Matteo loves— But you will see for yourself what opportunities there are, and you will use them. Corella thinks you have the wit to accomplish such a task. Afford me proof of it, and I will make your fortune." He waved his hand in dismissal, and Pantaleone stifled a hundred questions that were bubbling in his mind and departed.

Fra Serafino stroked his lean nose thoughtfully with his quill.

"I would not trust that fellow with a woman, nor a woman with that fellow," he delivered himself. "He is too full in the lips."

"That," said Cesare, "is why I chose him."

"In a woman's hands he will be so much wax," the monk continued.

"I am stiffening him with a thousand ducats," said the duke.

But the friar's pessimism was nothing lessened.

"A woman's arts can melt gold until it runs," said he.

The duke looked at him a moment.

"You know too much about women, Fra Serafino," he said. And under that rebuke the monkish secretary fell silent.

PANTALEONE DEGLI UBERTI arrived at Pievano on the wings of a snow-storm that swept across the Perugian foot-hills, and he arrived alone. Within a couple of leagues of the little town he had parted company with the ten knaves he had brought with him from Assisi. He gave them orders to break up into groups of twos and threes and thus follow him to Pievano, each group seeking different quarters and pretending no acquaintance with the others. He concerted signals by which at need he could rally them to himself, and arranged that of the group of three who were to take up their quarters at the Osteria del Toro, one at least should remain constantly at the inn, where at any moment Pantaleone could find him.

Messer Pantaleone, you see, was a man of method.

He bade them, further, dissemble their true estate, and, himself adopting this course which he imposed upon his followers,

he staggered some hours later over the draw-bridge into the courtyard of the citadel on foot, a bedraggled, foot-sore man who seemed to be upon the point of utter exhaustion. Admitted by a groom, he reeled into the presence of the Lord Almerico Orsini.

"I am a hunted man, my lord," he lied. "That bloody despot, Valentino, clamors for this poor life of mine to swell his hecatomb."

The old Lord of Pievano's white hands clawed the carved ebony arms of his great chair. From under shaggy brows his piercing dark eyes were bent upon this visitor. He knew well what was the hecatomb to which Messer Pantaleone referred; no need for him to ask. Absorbed though he might be in his studies and removed in mind, as in body, from all worldly turbulence, yet, being an Orsini, it was not in human nature that he should remain ignorant of and indifferent to the shedding of Orsini blood. And since here was a man who, as it seemed, was come straight from the scene of strife, he was to be welcomed as one bringing news on matters closely touching the Lord of Pievano.

Yet it was as characteristic of old Almerico Orsini as it was anomalous in his day—when life was cheap and the misfortunes of others troubled men but little—that his first thought should be for this stranger's condition. Seeing him so piteously bedraggled, so white and haggard, swaying like a drunkard where he stood and breathing with obvious difficulty—in short, a man who had reached the uttermost limits of endurance—the Lord Almerico made a swift sign to the groom who had admitted him. The lackey thrust forward a rush-seated chair, and into this Messer Pantaleone sank limply yet gratefully, loosening his great red cloak so that his soldier's leather harness was revealed.

He looked at the Lord Almerico with a faint smile that seemed to express his thanks, and then his bold eyes, seeming very weary now under their heavy, drooping lids, passed on to the lady who stood beside her father's chair. She was a girl—no more—of a willowy, virginal slenderness, very simply clad in a wine-colored gown cut square across her white young breast, and caught about her slender waist by a silver girdle with a beryl clasp. Her blue-black hair was held in a clump behind by a net of

golden cord; her eyes, of a blue so deep that they seemed almost black, considered him piteously from out of her pale face.

THUS Messer Pantaleone first beheld her, and since his taste in women was of the rude sort that craves for swelling amplitudes of form, his questing glance passed on without reluctance to rake the shadows of that noble chamber, looking for another, who was not present.

"Why are you come to me?" Almerico asked him, with inscrutable simplicity.

"Why?" Messer Pantaleone blinked as though the oddness of the question afforded him surprise. "Because you are an Orsini, and because my cause is the cause of the Orsini. Paolo Orsini was my friend."

"Was?" The question came sharply from Madonna Fulvia.

Pantaleone fetched a deep sigh, like a man in the uttermost depths of dejection.

"I see you have not heard. Paolo was strangled yesterday at Assisi, and with him was strangled the Duke of Gravina."

The old man uttered a sharp cry. He half rose from his seat, supporting himself upon trembling arms; then, bereft of strength, he sank back again.

"God's curse upon me who am the bearer of ill tidings!" growled the crafty Pantaleone savagely.

But the old man, recovering from his momentary collapse under the shock of that news, reproved him for his words, while Monna Fulvia stood immobile and rigid in a grief that was, after all, impersonal, for, although they were her kinsmen, she had known neither of those whose death this fugitive announced.

"That is not yet all," Pantaleone pursued, as if defending himself against the Lord Almerico's reproof. "From Rome comes news that the cardinal is in a dungeon of Sant' Angelo, that Giangiordano is taken, together with Santacroce and I know not whom besides. We know what mercy the Borgia will display. The pope and his bastard will never rest as long as in the House of Orsini one stone remains upon another."

"Then will he never rest, indeed," said Monna Fulvia proudly.

"I pray so, *madonna*; devoutly do I pray it—I who was Paolo Orsini's friend and who, to my undying shame, have served the

Borgia tyrant with him. For that—because Valentino knows that if I served him it was but because I served Orsini and that I am to be reckoned as of the Orsini's family—I am now proscribed and hunted, and if I am taken I shall perish as Paolo and Gravina perished and as men say that Matteo Orsini perished, too."

In nothing, perhaps, does the craft of the man appear so starkly as in this probing statement. As he spoke these words he watched father and daughter closely, seeming but to consider them with eyes of concern and pity. He saw the sudden movement of astonishment that neither could repress. Then came the girl's question, laden with a sudden and betraying eagerness.

"Do men say that?" she cried, her eyes kindling and her bosom quickening.

"It is the common talk," said that swindler sorrowfully. "I pray God and the saints it be untrue."

"Indeed—" Almerico began gravely, as if to reassure him, and then, caution supervening, he abruptly checked. Unworldly and guileless though he might be, yet some knowledge of his fellow man had come to him with his years, and this fugitive inspired him with little trust, wakening in him an unusual caution. Obeying it, he altered the tone and current of his phrase. "I thank you, sir, for that prayer."

But Pantaleone accounted himself answered and concluded that Cesare's suspicions were correct, and that Matteo Orsini was in hiding here at Pievano or hereabouts. He reasoned syllogistically. The woman who loved Matteo Orsini would not have received the news of his death with such equanimity had she not been positively assured that he was living. Such assurance in such times nothing short of the man's presence at Pievano could afford. The very eagerness with which she had received the rumor Pantaleone had invented of Matteo Orsini's death showed how welcome would be a tale that might diminish the hunt for that proscribed fugitive.

Wearing outwardly his mask of dejection, Messer Pantaleone's treacherous heart rejoiced in this assurance that he was hot upon the trail.

But now he had to submit to questionings from his host.

"You are from Assisi?" he inquired.

"From the Lord Duke of Valentinois' camp there," answered the emissary.

"And you fled incontinently when they strangled Paolo and Gravina?"

"Not so." Messer Pantaleone saw the trap. In a game of wits he was a match for any ten such recluse students as the Lord of Pievano. "That, as I have said, was yesterday—before Cesare Borgia had proof of my devotion to the Orsini. But for that same devotion and the need to act upon it I might have remained a captain in the tyrant's service. But it happened that I knew of Valentino's designs upon Petrucci at Siena. I attempted to send a letter of warning to Petrucci. That letter was intercepted, and I had but time to get to horse before the hangman's grooms should come to fetch me. I rode that beast to death a league from here. My notion was to get to Siena and Petrucci, but, being unhorsed and in hourly danger of capture, I bethought me that I would turn aside and seek sanctuary here. Yet, my lord," he ended, rising with elaborate show of physical pain and difficulty, "if so be you think that by my presence I shall draw down upon you Valentino's vengeful justice, then—" He gathered his cloak about him.

"A moment, sir—a moment—" said Almerico, hesitating, and he put forth a hand to stay the soldier.

"What matters Valentino?" cried the girl, and quick anger blazed in her eyes, transmuting them into fiery sapphires. "Who fears him? We were base indeed did we let you suffer for your generous impulse, sir. While there is a roof on Pievano, you may sleep tranquilly under it."

Don Almerico shifted in his chair and grunted as she brought that impulsive speech to its conclusion. His daughter went too fast, he thought. She outstripped him altogether in the matter of hospitality. He looked squarely at the stranger.

"What is your name, sir?" he asked him bluntly.

"I am called Pantaleone degli Uberti," said the adventurer, who had enough worldly wisdom never to make use of lies where truth could be employed with safety.

"An honorable name," the old man murmured, nodding as to himself. "Well, well! I will leave it, sir, to your discretion not to tarry at Pievano longer than need be. I think not of myself." He shrugged and

smiled deprecatingly—a smile of singular charm that illumined as with a light of lingering youth within the venerable old face. "I am too old to weigh the paltry sum of life remaining me against a service due to an honorable man. But there is this child to consider, and the risk of your discovery here——"

But at that she interrupted him.

"Who runs great risks may disregard such lesser ones!" she cried, whereat Ser Pantaleone became all ears.

"By the Host, not so!" her father answered. "We dare add nothing at present to draw attention upon ourselves. You see—" He checked under the suddenly tightened curb of reawakening caution, and his eyes flashed keenly upon his visitor.

But Pantaleone's face was dull and wooden, a mask betraying nothing of his inward satisfaction. For his quick wits had without difficulty completed the Lord of Pievano's broken sentence, and found it confirming the assurance he had already formed of Matteo Orsini's presence there.

Seeing himself scanned with mistrust, he chose that moment to stagger where he stood. He reeled sideways, one hand to his brow, the other groping feebly for support. Thus he crashed against a bronze table that stood near him, sent it slithering a yard or so along the marble tiles, and, missing its resistance, he fell heavily beside it and lay at full stretch upon the floor.

"I am spent," he groaned.

They sprang to him at once—all three—Almerico, his daughter and the groom, who had remained in the background, waiting his dismissal. And while her father went down on his old joints to lend immediate aid, Madonna Fulvia issued orders briskly to the gaping lackey.

"Fetch Mario quickly!" she commanded. "Bid them bring wine and vinegar and napkins. Run!"

PANTALEONE raised his lolling head and supported it against Almerico's knee. He opened dull eyes and babbled incoherent excuses for thus discomposing them. This manifestation of concern for them at such a moment touched them profoundly when coupled with his condition; it melted the old Orsini's lingering mistrust as snow upon the hills is melted by the April suns. The man's extremity was dire and obvious—

and what could have produced it but the tribulations of which he told?

Came Mario—a short, sturdy fellow with a face that was the color of clay, and so ridged and pitted by smallpox that it seemed no more than a hideous mask, a grotesque simulacrum of a human countenance. He was nominally the castellan of Pievano; in effect, he was many things—a factotum including in his manifold accomplishments the arts of surgeon, horse-leech and barber. He was rigidly honest, faithful, self-sufficient and ignorant.

In his wake now, as acolytes, came a groom, Monna Fulvia's own woman and Raffaele, the page. Among them they bore flasks and flagons, napkins and a silver basin. With the others they made a group about Ser Pantaleone, while Mario went down on one knee beside him and fumbled his pulse, his countenance grave.

This pulse-feeling was a piece of impressive mummery—no more. For whatever irregularity Mario had discovered there, his prescription would have varied nothing. Finding no irregularity whatever, it still varied nothing.

"Exhaustion. Ha!" he diagnosed. "A little blood-letting will revive him. I'll ease him of some six ounces, and all will be well." He rose. "Vincenzo, lend a hand and we'll carry him to bed. You, Raffaele, light the way for us."

So Mario and the groom lifted up our gentleman between them. The page took up one of the gilt candlesticks that stood taller than himself upon the floor and went ahead. The rear was brought up by Virginia, the waiting-maid, and thus, in some sort of state, was Messer Pantaleone degli Uberti carried to bed.

PANTALEONE woke refreshed upon the morrow, none the worse for the loss of the six ounces of blood upon which Mario's surgery had insisted, and to which he himself had been forced to submit that he might play out his part.

He found his room suffused with the pale sunshine of a January morning, and fragrant with the subtle, refreshing perfume of lemon verbenas steeped in potent vinegar; he found it occupied by the page Raffaele, a graceful stripling with a lovely, impudent face.

"For lack of a man to serve you, they have sent me," the page explained himself.

Pantaleone considered the supple figure in its suit of green that fitted it like a skin.

"And what are you?" he wondered. "A lizard?"

"I am glad to see you are mending," said the boy. "Impudence, they tell me, is a sign of health."

"And they tell it you often, I've no doubt, and find you healthy in excess," said Pantaleone, smiling grimly.

"*Gesù!*" said the boy, with uplifted eyes. "I'll bear news of your complete recovery to my lord."

"Stay!" Pantaleone bade him, desiring to have a certain matter explained. "Since you were sent to serve, give me first to eat. I may be an indifferent Christian, seeing that I have, in a sense, been in the service of the pope; but I find it difficult to fast in Lent and impossible in any other season. There is a bowl yonder, steaming. Let it be employed in the service for which it was designed."

Raffaele fetched the bowl, which contained a measure of broth, and with it a platter bearing a small wheaten loaf. He also fetched a silver basin with water and a napkin. But these Pantaleone waved impatiently away. He had been reared in camps, not courts, and was out of sympathy with the affectations of mincing fellows who carry washing to excess.

He drank a portion of the soup noisily, broke bread and munched it, considered the page gravely, and set out upon his quest of any information to be gathered.

"For lack of men they sent you to me," he said, pondering. "The Lord Almerico is a great and potent lord, such as should not want for lackeys. Whence, then, this lack of men?"

The boy perched himself upon the bed.

"Whence are you, Messer Pantaleone?" he inquired.

"I? I am from Perugia."

"And it is not known in Perugia that the Lord Almerico is above all things a man of peace—of peace and books? He is more concerned with Seneca than with any tyrant in Italy."

"With whom?" asked Pantaleone.

"With Seneca," the boy repeated.

"Who is he?" quoth Pantaleone, staring.

"A philosopher," said Raffaele. "My lord loves all philosophers."

"Then he will love me," said Pantaleone,

and drank the remainder of his broth. "But you haven't answered my question."

"I have, indeed. I conveyed to you that my lord keeps here no such family as might be expected in one of his estate. There are but four grooms in his service."

"Even so," said Pantaleone, "out of four, one might have been spared me."

"Ah, but then, Vincenzo, who helped to carry you to bed, is my lord's own body-servant; Giannone has his duties in the stables, and Andrea has gone down to the *borgo* on an errand for *madonna*."

"That makes but three."

"The fourth is Giuberti. But, then, Giuberti has vanished; he disappeared a week ago."

Pantaleone looked at the ceiling dreamily, reflecting how the vanishing of this Giuberti chanced to coincide with the vanishing of Matteo Orsini.

"He was dismissed, you mean?" he grumbled.

"I do not think so. It is a mystery. There was a great ado that morning here, and I have not seen Giuberti since. But he has not been dismissed, for I have been to his room and his garments are all there. Nor did he leave Pievano, unless he went on foot, for there is no horse missing from the stables. On the contrary—and that is another mystery which none can solve for me—on the morning after Giuberti's disappearance I found seven horses in the stables instead of the usual six. I went there to count them that I might discover whether Giuberti had gone away. As I set little faith in wizardry, I am not prepared to accept the simple explanation that Giuberti has been changed into a horse. Had it been an ass, now, I could have believed it—for no great metamorphosis would have been needed. But there it is. We have lost a biped and acquired a quadruped—an engaging mystery."

Pantaleone's face showed nothing of the keenness with which he listened to this fresh piece of indirect information of the fugitive's presence at Pievano. He smiled lazily at the boy and encouraged him with flattery to let his chatter flow more freely.

"By the Host," he approved him, "although you may be no more than a lad, you have a man's wit—indeed, more wit than many a man that I have known. You miss nothing."

"Indeed, not much," the boy agreed. "And I could tell you more. For instance, it happens that Mario's wife has also disappeared. Mario is our castellan—he with the pock-marked face who bore you to bed last night and bled you. Mario's wife had charge of the kitchen, and she vanished together with Giuberti. Now, that is a circumstance that intrigues me greatly."

"It might intrigue you less if you were older," said Pantaleone, implying something which he did not himself believe, and implying it solely as a goad.

Raffaele threw back his head and considered the soldier with some scorn.

"You said well when you said that I had more wit than many a man," he informed Pantaleone, with pointed significance. "A man, of course, would blunder here to a prompt and lewd conclusion. Bah, sir! I am a boy, not a cherub in a fresco. You have but to see Colomba—Mario's wife—to be assured of the chastity of her relations with Giuberti or with any man. You have seen Mario's lovely countenance, looking as if the devil had stamped on it with his hoofs and a red-hot horseshoe on each hoof. His wife's is even more uncomely, for she took the smallpox from him when he had it, which leaves them still the fit mates for each other that they were originally."

"Precocious ape!" said Pantaleone. "Your discourse is a scandal to a poor soldier's ears. I'd have the rods to you if you were boy of mine." He flung back the bedclothes so that the lad was momentarily smothered in them, and rose to dress himself. He had learned all that Raffaele could tell him.

"It is the mystery of it all that intrigues me," babbled the page, unabashed. "Can you solve the riddle, Ser Pantaleone?"

"I'll try," said Pantaleone, struggling with his hose, but Raffaele, for all his precocity, missed the grimness of that answer.

THUS, then, you see our adventurer in possession of certain facts that seemed to him tolerably clear—the disappearance of the groom, Giuberti, and of the woman, Colomba, synchronizing with the appearance of an additional horse in the stables, and hence, presumably, with the arrival at Pievano of Matteo Orsini, indicated that the care of him had been entrusted to those two servants. Now, since had Matteo

Orsini remained in the castle itself, so much would have been unnecessary, and it was further to be inferred that—no doubt for greater secrecy—he had been lodged elsewhere, though doubtlessly—and the presence of the horse confirmed this—somewhere within the precincts of the citadel.

Ser Pantaleone's next step must be to ascertain what quarters outside the actual *rocca* the place contained.

He dressed himself with care in the garments which the page had brought him from the kitchen, where they had been sedulously dried. Having no shoes, he must perforce resume his boots, and since the weather was chill and he would presently be taking a turn out of doors, he buckled on his leather acton over his apricot-colored doublet. Finally, with his long sword hanging from his steel girdle and a heavy dagger over his right hip, he made his way below, a handsome cavalier, swaggering and arrogant of port, in whom it was hardly possible to recognize the fainting, bedraggled fugitive who but yesternight had implored sanctuary of the Lord of Pievano.

The pert Raffaele ushered him into the presence of Messer Almerico and Madonna Fulvia. They received him cordially, expressing genuine pleasure at his evident recovery. All hesitation and mistrust appeared to have vanished from the old man's demeanor, whence Ser Pantaleone inferred that meanwhile the Lord of Pievano had consulted with Matteo, and that Matteo had told him—since, in fact, no man could have denied it—that his story was very possibly true and that he had been friendly with Paolo Orsini, as he said. Hence, superfluously now, the circumstance of Matteo's presence was confirmed to him yet again.

Intent upon his task, he would have gone forth at once, claiming the need to take the air. But here the clay-faced Mario interposed with all the pompous authority of a medical adviser.

"What, sir? Go forth—in your condition? It were a madness. Last night you had the fever and you were bled. You must rest and recover, or I will not answer for your life."

Pantaleone laughed—he had a deeply tuneful laugh that was readily provoked, for when he was not laughing with you he would laugh at you. He scorned the notion that he was weak or that the frosty air

would injure him. Was not the sun shining? Was he not quite himself again?

But Mario's opposition was nothing shaken; rather did it gather strength in argument.

"Since it is to my skill that you owe it that you feel recovered, let my skill guide you when I say that the feeling is an illusion, a lightness ensuing upon the relief of an excess of blood which I have procured you. Forth you do not go save at your peril, at the peril of undoing all the good I have done."

And then to Mario's persuasions were added those of Orsini and his daughter, until in the end, seeing that to insist further might be to waken suspicions dormant now, Ser Pantaleone, chafing inwardly but still laughing outwardly, submitted. He spent the day indoors, and found the time hang heavily, despite the kindly efforts exerted by his host and his host's daughter to lighten it for him.

The kindness which they lavished upon him, the fact that he sat at table and broke bread with them made no slightest impression upon Ser Pantaleone. The hideous treachery of the thing he did, the vileness of the manner in which he had insinuated himself into their confidence left him untouched. It was naught to him that he should sit there in Pievano receiving the hospitality that is bestowed upon a friend.

ON THE morrow, at last, he had his way, despite Mario's lingering doubts that it was unwise for him to go abroad. He would have taken the page with him for company, thinking that the chatterbox might be of service to him, but the excessive hospitality of Pievano ordained otherwise. Since he would not be denied his desire to take the air, Madonna Fulvia should be his guide. He protested that it was to do him too much—as, indeed, it was. Nevertheless, she insisted, and together they went forth.

The gardens of Pievano ran in a flight of terraces up the steep sides of the hill behind the castle, the whole of it enclosed by massive gray, machicolated walls that had stood two hundred years and more, and resisted more than one siege in the past—though that was before the days of such artillery as Cesare Borgia now commanded. In summer these terraces were cool lemon groves and cooler galleries of vine; but now all was

bare, a mere network of ramage to fret the January sunshine. Yet there were spaces of green turf, while the mountain above them showed brightly emerald where the snows had melted. Below them, a little to the north, was spread the shining face of Lake Trasimene.

They came slowly to the topmost terrace—there were six of them in all, whence a fine view was to be commanded of all that broad valley. Here they found a sheltered spot under the western wall, where a seat hewn out of granite was set before a deep tank sunk to its rim into the ground—one of a series that were used in summer for irrigation purposes. Above the seat, in a little semicircular niche, there was a figure of the Virgin Mother in baked earth, painted red and blue, that had become mottled by alternate rain and sunshine.

Ser Pantaleone slipped his great red cloak from his shoulders and spread it on the seat for his companion. She demurred a while. Was he wise to sit; was not the air too chill, and was he not perhaps heated from his walk? Thus, shaping her tender solicitude in questions, she warned him. But he reassured her with a buoyant laugh that made a mock of any assumption of weakness in his own condition.

SO, SIDE by side they sat on that hewn granite seat, beneath the image of the Virgin Mother above the granite tank where the water slept, a crystal mirror. So might a pair of lovers have sat; but if she had no thoughts of love for her companion—her devotion being all given to another, as we know—he had still less for her. It was not that he was usually sluggish to dalliance. Those full red lips of his told a different story, as Fra Serafino had observed. But in the first place his taste was all for generouslyhipped, deep-bosomed Hebes, and in the second his thoughts were all concerned with the solving of this problem of Matteo Orsini's hiding-place.

They commanded from that height a noble view of hills and valley, of lake and river, as we have seen. But with this again Ser Pantaleone was no whit concerned. His bold black eyes were questing nearer home, raking the disposition of the out-buildings to the left of the *rocca*, and an odd pavilion on the other side, occupying the middle of a quadrangular terrain that was

all walled about so as to form, as it were, a *hortus inclusus*.

He stretched his long, lithe legs and took a deep breath of the clean mountain air, noisily, like a draft that is relished. Then he sighed.

"Heigh-o! If it were mine to choose my estate in life, I would be lord of some such lordship as this of Pievano."

"The ambition is a modest one," said she.

"To have more is to have the power to work mischief, and who works mischief raises up enemies, and who raises up enemies goes in anxiety and may not know the pure joys of a contented life."

"My father would agree with you. That is why he has lived ever here, nor ever troubled himself to strive for more."

"He chose the better part, indeed," Ser Pantaleone agreed. "He has enough, and who has enough is happy."

"Ah, but whoever thinks that he has enough?"

"Your father thinks so, and so should I think, were I lord of Pievano. To one in your station, bearing your name, it may seem no more than mediocrity. Compared with what might be yours, mediocrity it is. Therein lies the secret of your happiness."

"You make sure that I am happy," said she.

He looked at her, and for a moment was in peril of straying into byways concerned with her own affairs. But he conquered this.

"I were blind not to see it," he said in a tone of finality. "Though when I said 'you' I meant not only yourself but your father also. And here lies cause enough. A noble lordship, commodious yet compact, the villeins in the *borgo* yonder paying tribute and fealty, the *rocca* itself with all accessory buildings close-packed under its mothering wing—saving perhaps that pavilion yonder in the enclosed garden," he excepted, waving his hand and speaking idly, giving no sign that thus at last, having reached it by slow and careful degrees, he came upon the goal which had been his since first he took his seat beside her. "That now," he continued musing, "is an odd construction. I cannot think for what purpose it can have been built."

There was a question plainly in the statement, and at once she answered it.

"It is a lazar-house," she said.

Startled, Ser Pantaleone shifted uneasily.

There was a sinister ring in the word that brought horrors leaping before the eyes of a man's imagination.

"A lazar-house?" he said, aghast.

She explained:

"It happened in the days when my father was no more than a boy. There was the plague in Florence, and it was carried thither to the *borgo*. Men were dying like flies at close of autumn. To succor them my grandfather ordered that pavilion to be built, with others that have since been demolished, and he had the place enclosed by walls. There was a saintly Minorite, one Fra Cristoforo, who came to tend the plague-ridden, and who himself was miraculously preserved from the contagion."

Ser Pantaleone twisted his features in a grimace of disgust.

"And do you keep that as a monument in honor of so ugly an event?" he asked.

"Why, no! There were other buildings there, but, as I have told you, they were demolished. That was the only one retained."

"But why?" he asked.

"It has its uses."

He looked at her with raised eyebrows.

"You will not tell me that it is tenanted?" he asked in a note that was faintly jesting.

"No, no!" She spoke too quickly, he noted; and her voice had trembled, while those deep, loyal eyes of hers had fallen guiltily away from his regard. "Of course it is not tenanted now."

He looked idly away toward the spot. She had lied to him, he was convinced already. Yet he would make assurance doubly sure. Suddenly he drew his legs under him and started, half rising, with a sudden exclamation, his face averted from her and turned toward the enclosed garden.

And then he felt her hand upon his sleeve.

"What is it?" she asked, and her voice was breathless.

"Surely—surely, you are wrong," he said.

"It is tenanted. It seemed to me that I saw something or some one move there in the shadow."

"Oh, no, no—impossible! You were mistaken! There is no one there!" Agitation quivered in every syllable of that breathless denial.

He had drawn from her the answer to the question he had not asked. Satisfied, he craftily made haste to reassure her.

"Why, no," he said, and laughed in self-derision. "I see now what it is—the shadow of that gnarled olive deceived me." He looked at her, a smile on his full lips. "Alas," he said, "you have laid what might have become the ghost of Fra—what was his name?"

"Of Fra Cristoforo," said she, and smiled back at him in her relief. But she rose. "Come, sir; you have sat here too long for one in your condition."

"Long enough," said Pantaleone, with more truth than she suspected, and he rose obediently to depart.

It was as he said. He had sat there long enough to achieve his ends, and the very suddenness with which now she urged his departure was yet a further confirmation of what he had discovered. She desired to draw him from that spot before he should chance, indeed, to see what she believed him to have imagined he had seen. Very willingly, then, he went.

A FOOL never doubts his judgment or questions its findings. He reaches a conclusion at a leap, and, having reached it, acts forthwith upon it. And that is why he is a fool. But your really astute fellow moves more slowly and with caution, testing the ground at every step, mistrusting his inferences until he has exhausted confirmation of them. Even where he is swift to conclude, he will still be slow to act unless urged by necessity to immediate action.

Thus Pantaleone. He had added link to link until he held in his hands a fairly solid chain of circumstantial evidence, from which he was entitled to infer, firstly—and this most positively—that Matteo Orsini was sheltered at Pievano; secondly—and not quite so positively—that he was bestowed in the lazar-house in that *hortus inclusus*.

A rash fellow would have summoned his men and forthwith stormed the place. But Pantaleone was not rash. He counted first the cost of error. He considered that, in spite of all indications, it was yet possible that his quarry might not be in that lazar-house. And in that case, did he take any such action, he would find himself in the position of a gamester who, staking all upon a single throw, has seen the dice turn up ambs-ace. He would have discovered himself in his true character, and must submit

to being driven forth in ignominy to bear his tale of failure to his master.

Therefore, despite his stout convictions, Pantaleone waited and watched what time he took his ease at Pievano and savored the hospitality of the Lord Almerico. He walked in the gardens with *madonna* in the mornings; in the afternoon he would either permit Raffaele to teach him chess or repay these lessons by showing the golden-haired lad how to use a sword in conjunction with a dagger, and by what tricks—not tricks of swordsmanship, indeed, but of pure knavery—an adversary might be done to death; in the evenings he would converse with his host, which is to say that he would listen to the Lord Almerico's learned disquisitions upon life culled from the philosophy of Seneca or the teachings of Epictetus as preserved in the writings of Flavius Arrianus.

Pantaleone, it must be confessed, was a little bewildered and wearied by these discourses. A man with his full lips, and all the qualities those full lips implied, could find scant sense in the austere philosophy of the stoic, though he was faintly interested to observe the hold which that teaching had gained upon his host, and how his host appeared to have modeled the conduct of his life upon it, purchasing tranquillity as the stoic teaches. Although it was not thus that Pantaleone understood existence, yet he forbore argument and feigned agreement, knowing in his crafty way that agreement with a man is the short road to his esteem and confidence.

He earned, however, little discernible reward for all his patient pains. No such confidences as he hoped for were ever reposed in him. Matteo Orsini's name was never mentioned in his presence, and when once he mentioned it himself, to speak in glowing praise of the man and in a proper sorrow at his reported death, he was met by a silence that showed him how far indeed he was, their amiability notwithstanding, from having earned their trust.

Thus a week passed in which his mission made no progress, whereat he was beginning to grow restive, feeling that if his inaction endured much longer it might end by thrusting him into a rashness. No single shred of confirmation had his conclusions received, no single grain of independent evidence that the lazar-house was tenanted. And then,

at last, one night, as he was taking his way to bed, lighted by Raffaele, who was now become his body-servant, he chanced upon a small discovery.

His own room was over the *rocca's* vast courtyard, and commanded no other view but that. But as on his way to it he passed one of the windows of the gallery facing southward toward that *hortus inclusus*, and as idly he looked in that direction, he caught the yellow glint of a point of light that was moving toward it through the darkness.

He was satisfied that what he did any man in his place would have done, and, therefore, that it could waken no suspicion. He stood still, looking at that light a moment, and then drew the page's attention to it.

"Some one is roving in the gardens very late," said he.

Raffaele came to stand beside him and pressed his face against the glass.

"It will be Mario," said the boy. "I saw him standing by the door when I came up."

"And what the devil does he do in the garden at such an hour? He can hardly be gathering snails at this season of the year."

"Indeed, no," agreed Raffaele, clearly intrigued.

"Ah, well," said Pantaleone, who perceived that he was wasting time, since Raffaele had no knowledge to betray, "it is no affair of ours." He yawned. "Come on, my lad, or I shall sleep where I stand."

FIRST he thought of alluding to the matter casually upon the morrow, watching the effect upon Almerico and his daughter. But sleep brought sounder counsels, and when the morrow came he held his peace. He walked as usual with *madonna* in the garden, though never now on the upper terraces, whence a view was obtained of the enclosure about the lazar-house. She had refused to repeat that visit of theirs to the garden's heights, ever pleading that she found that ascent excessively fatiguing.

Pantaleone habitually wore a tiny gold pomander ball, no larger than a cherry, suspended from his neck by a slender chain of gold. He wore it as usual that morning when they went forth together; but had *madonna* observed him closely, she would have noted that at a stage of their sauntering it vanished.

Pantaleone remained apparently unconscious of its disappearance until toward the third hour of night—after they had supped and when it was usual for them to retire to bed, the hour, in fact, at which last night he had observed that mysterious light in the garden. Then it was that quite suddenly he leaped to his feet, with an exclamation of dismay that provoked their concerned inquiries.

"My pomander!" he cried, with all the air of a man whom some great mischance has overwhelmed. "I have lost it!"

My Lord Almerico recovered from his concern and smiled. He quoted the Stoic.

"In this life, my friend, we never lose anything. Sometimes we return a thing. That is the proper view. Why, then, all this concern about a pomander—a trifle that may be replaced by a ducat."

"Should I be so concerned if that were all?" cried Pantaleone, with a faint show of impatience at the philosophy with which Orsini bore another's loss. "It was my talisman—a potent charm against the evil eye given me by my sainted mother. For her sake I hold it sacred. I would sooner lose all I have than that."

It made a difference, Monna Fulvia agreed, admiring the filial piety he displayed; and even her father had no more to say.

"Let me think, now; let me think," said Pantaleone, standing rapt, fingering the cleft in his shaven chin. "I had it this morning in the garden—at least, I had it when I went forth. I— Yes!" He smote fist into palm. "It was in the garden—it must have been in the garden that I lost it." And without a by-your-leave to his host, he swung to the page.

"A lantern, Raffaele!"

"Were it not wiser to wait until daylight?" wondered Almerico.

"Sir, sir," cried Pantaleone wildly, "I could not rest, I could not sleep in my suspense, in my uncertainty as to whether I shall recover it or not!"

They attempted further to dissuade him, but before his wild insistence and his general air of distraction they gave way, the old nobleman hardly troubling to veil a sneer at superstitions that could take such potent hold upon a man. Since nothing less than to go forth at once would satisfy him, they bade Raffaele go with him, and whether this was a measure of kindly concern or

whether of precaution, Pantaleone was by no means sure.

Forth into the night sallied he and Raffaele, each armed with a lantern, and straight they went to the first terrace. With their double light they searched every foot of the long walk, all to no purpose.

"Five ducats, Raffaele, if you find it," said Pantaleone. "Let us divide our forces; thus are we likely to shorten the search. Do you go up to the next terrace and search that carefully, foot by foot. Five ducats if you find it."

"Five ducats!" Raffaele was a little breathless. "Why, the thing isn't worth more than half a ducat!"

"Nevertheless, five shall you have if you find it. I value it far above its price."

RAFFAELE sped upward with his lantern, leaving Pantaleone in the act of resuming his search over ground that had been covered already. The adventurer waited until the sound of the lad's footsteps had grown distant and until from where he stood the other's light was no longer visible. Then he passed behind a stiff box hedge that would screen his own light from any windows of the house, and there, without more ado, he extinguished it. That done, he crossed the garden with as much speed as was consistent with his care to make no sound. By a clump of larches within a dozen paces of the wall of the enclosure he came to a halt, effaced himself among the trees and waited, watchful and listening.

Moments passed in utter silence. In the distance he could perceive the faint gleam of Raffaele's lantern moving at a snail's pace along the third terrace on the hillside. Raffaele, he knew, was safely engaged for the next hour. That promise of five ducats would sustain his patience against failure. While any who might be spying from the house would be able to make out no more than a glimmer of light up yonder, and would suppose that Raffaele and himself were engaged together.

Reassured on that score, then, Pantaleone was patient on his side, and waited. Nor was his patience sorely taxed. Some ten minutes or so after he had gained his point of observation, he heard the creaking of a door, and from the postern in the inner barbican he beheld the gleam of another lantern. It advanced swiftly toward him—

for a pathway ran beside the larches—and presently there came the sound of feet. Soon Pantaleone could discern the figure of a man faintly outlined in the gloom.

Immovable he stood, screened by the larches, unseen yet observing. The figure advanced; it passed so closely by him that by putting forth his arm he might have touched it. He recognized the livid, pock-marked face of the castellan, and he noted that the fellow carried a basket slung on the crook of his left arm. He caught the faint gleam of napery atop of it, and thrusting forth from this the neck of a wine-flask.

The man passed on and reached the wall. A green door was set in it just thereabouts, and Pantaleone was prepared to see him vanish through, preparing, indeed, to follow. Instead, however, Mario paused at the wall's foot, some ten paces away from that door, and Pantaleone caught the sound of hands softly clapped and a voice softly calling,

"Are you there, Colomba?"

Instantly from beyond the wall floated the answer in a woman's voice:

"I am here."

WHAT followed was none so distinct, and asked for guesswork on Pantaleone's part. Partly he saw and partly inferred that Mario had taken a ladder that lay at the wall's foot, set it against the wall, mounted it, and from the summit slung down his basket to his wife within the enclosure. That was all. The thing being done, Mario descended again, removed the ladder and returned, unencumbered now and moving swiftly.

Pantaleone found his every suspicion confirmed. As he had supposed, Colomba and the groom Giuberti were ministering to the concealed Matteo Orsini, whose food was borne to him thus in the night by Mario—and no doubt in the raw, to be cooked and prepared by Mario's wife—so that none in Pievano should share the secret with those who already were in possession of it.

All this was clear as daylight. But on the other hand the affair had its dark and mysterious side. Why should Mario employ a ladder to scale a wall when there was a door there ready to his hand? It was very odd, but it was some detail of precaution, he supposed, and dismissed the matter with that explanation.

Moreover, something was happening that suddenly drew his attention to himself and his own position. Mario, instead of returning to the house, had paused midway a moment, as if hesitating, and then had struck across the gardens toward the light that marked the spot where Raffaele hunted.

Now, this, to Messer Pantaleone, was a serious matter. It might, unless he were careful, lead to the discovery of his own real pursuits. He came forth from his concealment and very softly set himself to follow Mario. Thus as far as the second terrace. Then, as Mario still went on upward, Pantaleone turned quickly away to the right, thus returning to the very spot where he had extinguished his lantern. Arrived there, he turned and came running back, shouting as he ran:

"Raffaele! Raffaele!"

He saw the swinging lantern of Mario arrested in its progress, and a moment later, farther along the upper terrace, gleamed Raffaele's light as the boy approached the edge in answer to that summons.

"I have found it!" cried Pantaleone, as indeed he had found it—in his pocket where it had been safely bestowed.

He advanced to the foot of the flight of steps that led upward, and there he waited for them.

"You have found it?" quoth Raffaele, crestfallen.

Pantaleone dangled it aloft by the chain.

"Behold!" he said, and added: "But you shall have a ducat for your pains none the less. So comfort you."

"Did you find it in the dark?" It was Mario's voice that growled the question, and Pantaleone was quick to catch the note of suspicion running through it.

"Fool!" he answered, preferring to take him literally. "How could I have found it in the dark? I upset my lantern in my excitement."

Mario was scanning his face closely.

"It is very odd," said he, "that as I came this way I saw no light."

"I was beyond the hedge yonder. That may have screened it," Pantaleone explained, and added no word more, for he knew that who explains himself too much accuses himself.

They trooped back to the house together, Raffaele silenced by his disappointment, Mario thoughtful and suspicious of all this

ado, Pantaleone babbling naively in his delight at the recovery of his precious amulet, and recounting the circumstances under which his mother had set it round his neck, with what words she had enjoined him to keep it safe, and against what dreadful perils it had been his shield—all lies that came bubbling from his fertile mind.

But despite all this, when, at length, he came to bid good-night to Mario, he saw that clay-colored face grimly set in lines of mistrust.

He went thoughtfully to bed in consequence. He lay awake some time considering his discovery, and considering still more deeply that part of it which left him mystified. At another time he might have delayed his action until he had cleared that up. But here he decided that to delay further might be dangerous. He told himself again that he had discovered all that mattered, and he fell asleep promising himself that upon the morrow he would act upon that discovery and lay Messer Matteo Orsini snugly by the heels.

THE manner adopted by Messer Pantaleone in which to do the thing he had been sent to do was startling and yet precisely such as was to have been looked for in a man of his temper.

He had been that day—the day following upon the affair of the lost amulet—down into the *borgo* of Pievano for the first time since his coming to the castle. As a pretext for this he had urged the need to mend the leg of one of his boots, which had become torn during his search last night. Himself he had ripped it with his dagger.

He had made his way in the first place to a cobbler with whom, perforce, he remained until the required repairs had been effected. From the cobbler's he went to the Osteria del Orso, ostensibly to refresh himself, actually to issue his orders to his knaves through the one he had posted there. It resulted from these movements of his that, as dusk was falling, his ten *sbirri* wandered singly and unchallenged over the drawbridge into the empty courtyard of the castle. No guards were kept at Pievano, as we know, and so this piecemeal invasion was neither hindered nor yet so much as observed.

When he had assured himself that these knaves of his were at hand, Messer Pantaleone, armed, booted, spurred, cap in hand

and wrapped in his ample red cloak—obviously ready to take the road forthwith—strode into the hall of the *rocca*. He found the Lord Almerico engrossed in a volume of manuscript, and Madonna Fulvia with him.

They looked up sharply, inexplicably startled by the manner of his advent. There was a subtle change in his air. It was more arrogant and self-assertive than usual; here was no longer the guest with just so much swagger as was inseparable from a soldier of fortune, but one who seemed to come mantled in authority.

"My lord," he announced bluntly, "I have a duty to perform and ten stout fellows below to help me against the need of help. Will you summon your nephew, Matteo Orsini, who is hiding here?"

They were like people stupefied. Then at last the girl spoke, her brows contracted, her eyes flashing like somber jewels in her white face.

"What is your purpose with Matteo?"

"The Lord Cesare Borgia's purpose," he answered brutally. "I was sent hither to arrest Ser Matteo by order of the duke."

Again there fell a pause, what time those four eyes searched his bold countenance. The Lord Almerico closed his book upon his forefinger, and a faint yet intensely scornful smile broke upon the gray old face.

"Then," said Madonna Fulvia, "all this time we—we have been your dupes. You lied to us. Your faintness, the persecution of which you were the victim, was all so much pretense." There was a note of incredulity in her voice.

"Necessity," he reminded her, "knows no law." And although he was neither shamed nor daunted by their steadfast, scornful stare, yet he grew weary of it. "Come," he added roughly; "you have had your fill of looking at me. Let us get to business. Send for this traitor you are harboring."

Madonna Fulvia drew herself stiffly up.

"My God!" she exclaimed. "A base Judas, a dirty spy! And I have sat at table with you! We have housed you here as an equal!" Her voice soared upward from the low note of horror and disgust upon which she had spoken. "O vile, O pitiful dog!" she cried. "Was this your errand? Was this——"

Her father's hand fell gently upon her arm.

"Hush, child! Self-respect forbids that

you should address so base a creature even to upbraid it." His voice was calm and level. "What is it to you that he is vile and treacherous, a shameless thing of shame? Does that hurt you? Does it hurt any but himself?"

"Aye; does it hurt me?" she cried. "It hurts me, and it hurts Matteo."

"Can it really hurt a man to die?" wondered Almerico. "Matteo, being dead, shall yet live. But that poor thing, being living, is yet dead."

"Shall we come to business?" Pantaleone broke in upon what promised to develop into an eloquent discourse upon life and death, chiefly derived from Seneca. "Will you send for Matteo Orsini, or shall I bid my men drag him from the lazar-home. It is idle to resist, futile to delay. My knaves have hemmed the place about."

He saw a change of expression sweep across both faces. The girl's eyes dilated—with fear, as he supposed; the old man uttered a short, sharp laugh—of stoicism, he opined.

"Why, sir," said Almerico, "since you are so well informed, you had best yourself complete your task of infamy."

Pantaleone looked at him a moment and then shrugged.

"Be it so," he said shortly, and swung upon his heel to go about it.

"No, no!" It was Madonna Fulvia who arrested him with that cry, sharp with a new anxiety. "Wait, sir! Wait!"

He paused obediently and half-turned. He beheld her standing tense and straight, one hand pressed upon her bosom as if to quell its tumult, the other held out to him in a gesture of supplication.

"Give me leave to speak with my father alone ere—ere we decide," she panted.

Pantaleone sniffed.

"Decide?" quoth he. "What remains to be decided?"

She wrung her hands in a pathetic intensity of mental stress.

"We—we may have a proposal to make to you, sir."

"A proposal?" he said, and scowled. Did they seek to bribe him? "By the Host—" he began hotly, and there checked.

The cupidity of his nature leaped up instantly, roused and alert. After all, he bethought him, there would be no harm in hearing this proposal. The man is a fool

who neglects to learn anything from which he may cull personal advantage. He considered further. After all, none save himself was aware of Matteo Orsini's presence at Pievano, and if the price were high enough—who knew?—he might be induced to keep that knowledge to himself. But the price must needs be high to compensate him not only for the loss of the thousand ducats offered by the duke but for the hurt his vanity would suffer in the admission of failure.

SEEING him silent, and conceiving that he hesitated, *madonna* renewed her prayer.

"What harm can it do to grant me this?" she asked. "Have you not said that the place is hemmed about by your men? Are you not master of the situation?"

He bowed stiffly.

"I will concede it you," he said. "I shall wait your pleasure in the antechamber." And upon that he went out.

Left alone, father and daughter looked long at each other.

"Why did you hinder him?" asked the Lord of Pievano at length. "Surely you were not moved by any thought of pity for such a man?"

Her lip curled in a scornful smile.

"You cannot think that—not in your heart," she said.

"It is because I cannot think it that I ask. I am all bewildered."

"Had we allowed him to go, consider what, in his vengeance, he might have done. He might have summoned these men of his and ransacked the *rocca* until he discovered Matteo indeed."

"But surely that must inevitably follow now. How can we prevent it?"

She leaned toward him.

"To what purpose do you study so deeply the lore of human nature if in practise you cannot probe the shallow, murky depth of such a nature as this dog's?"

He shrank back, staring at her, feeling that his philosophy had taught him nothing indeed if in an extremity such as the present one this child could show him how it should be handled.

"Do you not know—does it not say so in any of those pages—that who betrays once, will betray again and yet again?"

"You mean that we should bribe him?"



The plague-laden parchment floated from his hands. There was a sudden, alarmed movement on all sides to back away beyond the radius of its venom.

She drew herself up and uttered a short laugh.

"I mean that we should seem to bribe him. Oh"—she pressed her hands to her white brow—"I have a vision of something that lies before us here. It is as if a door had been opened, a weapon thrust into my hand by means of which I can smite and at a blow avenge all the wrongs of the Orsini."

"Pish! You are fevered, child. Here is no work for a weak maid."

"Not for a weak maid—no; but for a strong one," she broke in impetuously. "Work for a woman of the Orsini. Listen!"

She leaned toward him again, lowering her voice instinctively because of the secret thing she had to communicate. Speaking quickly now, she expounded the whole plan that had flashed into her ready-witted mind.

He listened, hunched in his chair, and the farther she proceeded the more hunched he became, like one who instinctively gathers himself together against a blow that is about to fall.

"My God!" he gasped when she had done, and his old eyes stared at her between amazement and dismay. "My God! And your pure virgin mind has conceived this horror! In all these years I have not known you, Fulvia. I have deemed you a child, and you—" Words eluded him. Limply he waved his old, transparent hands. The stoic in him had succumbed to the parent.

He would have dissuaded her out of his deep concern for her, his only child. But she was not to be dissuaded. She argued on, gathering enthusiasm as she dwelt upon the means by which she would at a single blow strike down this base betrayer and his master, the Duke of Valentinois. She urged that there was no safety for her or him or any Orsini in her refraining from this step upon which she was resolved. She reminded him that as long as Cesare Borgia lived no single Orsini would be safe, and she concluded by announcing that she believed her mission inspired by heaven itself, that she, a maid and the weakest of the Orsini, should avenge the wrongs of their house and stay its further ruin.

At last his shocked, bruised mind became infected by something of her ardor—enough, at least, to wring from him a grudging, fearful consent to let her have her way.

"Leave me," she said, "to deal with

Cesare Borgia and his lackey, and do you pray for the souls of both."

Upon that she kissed him, and swept out to the impatient Pantaleone, waiting in the sparsely furnished antechamber.

HE WAS seated in a high-backed chair by a carved table that bore a cluster of candles in a silver branch. He rose as she entered, marking her pallor and obvious agitation. To the stately beauty of her, her slim height and the fine poise of her lovely head, he remained indifferent.

She came to lean against the table, facing him across it, considering him with a glance that was steady.

Pantaleone was shrewd and crafty, as we know, but his craft was a shallow business when compared with her own; his shrewdness was mere low cunning when contrasted with her agile wits.

In the moment in which he had revealed himself for what he was she had judged him, and she had judged him to the weight of a hair of his vile head. Upon that judgment she now went to work.

"Consider me well, Ser Pantaleone," she invited him, her voice level and calm. "Tell me now; do you not find me fair to see, and am I not shapely?"

He bowed, his face almost sardonic.

"Fair as an angel, assuredly, *madonna*. But what has this to do with—"

"In short, sir, do you account me desirable?"

The question robbed him of breath, so amazing was it. It was a moment ere he found an answer, and by then the sardonic smile had passed entirely from his face. His pulses were quickened under her steady glance and her no less steady invitation to appraise her. He pondered her now, and discovered a thousand graces in her to which he had hitherto been blind. He may even have realized that her chaste beauty held a subtler appeal than the grosser femininity to which his senses more usually responded.

"Desirable as paradise," said he at last.

"And to render me so, there is not merely this perishable beauty that is mine. I am well dowered. A matter of ten thousand ducats goes with me to the man I wed," she informed him, and turned him giddy by the mention of so vast a sum.

"Ten thousand ducats?" he repeated slowly, awestricken.

"To the man who weds me," she insisted, and added quietly, "Will you be that man?"

"Will I—" He checked. No, no! The thing was incredible. The shock of that question almost stunned him. He gaped at her, and his handsome face turned pale under its tan.

"Upon the condition, of course," she pursued, "that you abandon this quest for Ser Matteo and bear word to your master that he is not to be found."

"Of course, of course," he mumbled foolishly.

THEN he reassembled his scattered wits and set them to read him this riddle. She was Matteo's betrothed. She loved Matteo. And yet— Or could it be that her love was of that great self-sacrificing kind of which he had heard—but in which he had never believed—that will surrender all for the sake of the beloved? He could not swallow that. It was not in his nature to be so credulous. And then he threw up his head, his nostrils quivering. Suddenly he scented danger. A trap was being baited for him. Bluntly he said so, laughing short and scornfully. But her reply disarmed his last suspicion.

"Take your own measures," she invited him serenely. "I understand your fears. But we are honorable folk, and if I swear to you that Matteo Orsini shall not stir him hence until this matter is done beyond recalling, so shall it be. Yet take your measures. You have the men and the power. Let them remain at their post surrounding that garden. Do that to-night, and to-morrow I will ride with you to Castel' della Pieve to become your wife."

Slowly he licked his lips, and his bold eyes narrowed as they surveyed her greedily. Yet still he was suspicious.

"Why at Castel' della Pieve?" he asked. "Why not here?"

"Because I must be sure that you will keep faith. Castel' della Pieve is the nearest place—yet far enough to leave Matteo a clear road of flight."

"I understand," he said slowly.

"And you agree?"

His keen black eyes stabbed into her calm white face as though they would pierce to her very soul and probe its secrets. It was incredible. To have fortune thrust upon him thus—fortune and a wife, and such a

wife; for in his eyes she was growing more desirable moment by moment as he considered her. Had not Fra Serafino warned the duke that this man would be as wax in the hands of a woman?

What greater profit—what profit one-tenth as great could he look for in taking Ser Matteo, in keeping faith with Valentino? He made, you see, no attempt to struggle with the temptation. He did not give so much as a thought to a young woman in the Bolognese—one Leocadia by name—who kept a wine shop at Laveno, who had borne him a son and whom he had promised to marry. But all that had happened before he had risen to the rank of a *condottiero* and earned the regard and trust of Cesare Borgia; and of late, in his new-found importance, it had shrunk into a dim and distant background. It did not trouble him now. If he hesitated, it was only because the thing proposed him was beyond belief. It bewildered him; a fog settled down upon his wits. By the Host, how she must love this fellow Matteo! Or was it—was it, perhaps, that he himself—

Now, here was a possibility hitherto unregarded, here something that might explain her singular attitude toward him. In saving Matteo she performed a duty, and by the very manner of it placed a barrier between herself and a lover of whom she had wearied. Thus his vanity to complete the rout of his perspicuity, to convince him where cold reason failed.

"Agree?" he cried, after that long pause. "Agree? By the eyes of God, am I a wooden image or a purblind fool to refuse? I'll set a seal forthwith upon that contract." And with arms flung wide he swooped down upon her like a hawk upon a dove and caught her to him.

She suffered it, stiff and cold with sudden terror and repressed loathing. He held her close and muttered foolish fondness. Then, the awakened passion mounting, it became suffused with tenderness, and he told her of a future in which he should be the slave of her slightest whim, her devout and worshipping lover always.

At length she released herself from those lithe arms and drew away from him, a hectic spot on either cheek, deep shame in her soul and a sense of defilement pervading all her being. He watched her, abashed a little, mistrustful, even.

But when she had gained the door she paused, and there for an instant her iciness melted. Her laugh trilled softly across the chamber to him.

"To-morrow!" she flung at him, and vanished, leaving him distracted.

PERPLEXED, yet true to his adventurer's character, determined to follow his fortunes and accept such chances as there might be, Pantaleone took his measures against possible treachery, posted his men for the night so as to make quite certain that his prey did not escape until Madonna Fulvia and himself should be on their way to the nuptials and, that done, went to bed to dream of a roseate future ennobled by ten thousand ducats.

While he dreamed his aureate dreams, Madonna Fulvia was planning his destruction and another's. She indited a note calculatedly enigmatic and brief that it might provoke curiosity, and through this the response which she desired. She couched it in an odd mixture of curial Latin and the common language of the people.

MAGNIFICENT (*Magnifice Vir*): You are betrayed by one whom you hired to a betrayal. Before the *duomo* of Castel' della Pieve punctually at high noon to-morrow, I will afford you proof of it if your Illustrious Magnificence is pleased to be there to receive it.

Your servant (*Servitrix vestra*),
FULVIA ORSINI.

From the Rocca of Pievano, this 20th day of January, 1503.

And under her signature she added the two words: "*Manu propria*," which her self-respect seemed to demand of her.

Then came the superscription:

To the Illustrious Prince, the Duke of Valentinois these:

Quickly
Quickly
Quickly.

As she shook the pounce over the wet ink she called Raffaele, who lay prone upon an Eastern rug before the fire, kicking his heels in the air. Instantly he leaped to her summons.

She set her hands upon his shoulders and looked steadily into his lovely face.

"Will you do a man's work for me, Raffaele? I have need of a man, and there is none here whom I can spare. Will you

ride to-night to Cesare Borgia's camp at Castel' della Pieve with this letter?"

"If that be all that is needed to prove myself a man, account it proven," said he.

"Good lad! Dear lad! Now listen; there may be spies about the gate, and so it were best you went forth on foot from here. If you can slip out unseen, it will be better still. Then go down into the *borgo* to the house of Villanelli. Bid him lend you a horse for my service, but say no word, even to him, of whither you ride. Be circumspect and swift."

"Trust me, *madonna*," said the lad, slipping the letter into the breast of his doublet.

"I do; else I should not charge you with this message. God watch over you! Send Mario to me as you go."

He went forthwith, and soon came Mario in answer to her summons.

"How is it with Giuberti to-night?" she asked the seneschal as he entered.

He shrugged despondently.

"I doubt if the poor fellow will be alive by morning," he answered.

Her face was drawn and grave; her eyes were sad.

"Poor lad!" she said. "Is the end indeed so near?"

"A miracle might save him. Nothing less. But miracles do not happen now."

She paced slowly to the hearth, her face thoughtful, her eyes bent upon the ground. Thus she stood for a long moment, Mario waiting.

"Mario," she said at last, speaking very quietly, "there is a service I require of you this night—of you and Colomba."

"We are yours to command, *madonna*."

Yet when she had told him what the service was she saw him recoil, aghast, horror stamped upon that face which the ravages of disease had made so horrible.

At that she fell to pleading with him, and with a burning eloquence she set forth the wrongs her house had suffered, spoke of the Orsini blood that had been shed to gratify Borgian ambition and to satiate Borgian vengeance, and so in the end won him to her will.

"Be it so, then, *madonna*, since you desire it," he said, but he shuddered even as he spoke. "Have you the letter written?"

"Not yet. Come to me again soon, and it shall be ready."

In silence he departed, and she returned

to the writing-pulpit. For a while she could not write, such was the tremor of her hand as a consequence of the agitation her interview with Mario had produced in her. Presently, however, she recovered her self-control, and thereafter for a spell there was no sound in the chamber save the scratch of her busy quill.

MARIO returned before she had finished, and stood waiting patiently until, rising, she flung down her pen and proffered him the accomplished document.

"You understand?" she said.

"I understand, *madonna*. God knows it is simple—terribly simple." And he looked at her with eyes of sorrow, conveying by his glance that what he found so terrible was that one so young and lovely should have conceived a notion so diabolical as this.

"And you will instruct Colomba carefully, so that there is no mistake?"

"There will be none," he promised. "I have the cane, and I myself will prepare it. A thorn is easily procured."

"Let me have it, then, at daybreak. Bring it to my chamber. You will find me risen, and ready for a journey."

At that he was gripped by a fresh alarm.

"You are not yourself to be the bearer of it?" he cried out.

"Whom else?" she asked him. "Could I demand such a service of any other?"

"*Gesù!*" he wailed. "Does my lord know of this?"

"Something of it. Enough of it. Not a word more now, Mario. Away with you, and see it done."

"Ah, but consider, *madonna*, what you risk. Consider, *madonna*—I beseech you!"

"I have considered. I am an Orsini. Orsini have been strangled at Assisi; others are jailed in Rome. Matteo's life is sought by this insatiable monster of revenge. I go there both to save and to avenge. I shall not fail."

"Ah, but *madonna* mine—" he began, his voice quavering, tears gathering in his eyes.

"No more, as you love me, Mario. Do my will. You cannot alter it."

The tone, invested with a stern inflexibility that never before had he known in her—and he had known her from her very birth—made an end of his protests. She was the mistress, he the servant, almost the slave, owing unquestioning obedience. And

so Mario, heavy-hearted, went his ways to do as she commanded, while she followed soon thereafter to seek what sleep she could, and in that sleep the strength to perform the task that lay before her.

The morning found her pale but calm when she came to confront her bridegroom in the hall.

The Lord of Pievano kept his chamber. Not all his stoicism was equal to the ordeal of sitting down to meat again with such a thing as Pantaleone, or witnessing the humiliation to which his daughter was to subject herself. However much he might esteem the end in view—since he was an Orsini before being a philosopher—he abhorred the means, and took the course of refusing them his countenance and remaining passive. Yet—in justice to him, be it said—of a certainty he would not have remained so had he known her full intent. A part of it only had she revealed to him.

Pantaleone was tortured between elation at the extraordinary good fortune that had so unexpectedly been flung into his lap and an irrepressible misgiving, an incredulity, a doubt as to its genuineness. Something of this was reflected in his glance as he came now into her presence. It had lost much of its habitual arrogant confidence; it seemed even a little strained.

He crossed to her, swaggering, since to swagger was natural to him; but there was none of the air of proprietorship that naturally was to be looked for in such a man toward the woman whom he had won to wife. Indeed, it was almost with humility that he took her hand and bore it to his lips, she suffering it in the same icy detachment in which last night she had suffered his terrible embrace.

They sat down to table to break their fast, with none to wait upon them but the silent, sphinxlike Mario. Even Raffaele was absent, and Pantaleone had missed the pert lad's ministrations on that morning of mornings.

He commented upon this, as much to ease the increasing strain of their silence as because he desired to know what had become of the page. *Madonna* excused the boy, saying that he was none so well and kept his bed. The truth was that he had but sought it a half-hour ago, upon his return from his ride to Castel' della Pieve and the safe delivery of his letter.

They set out soon after and took the road by the marsh toward Castel' della Pieve. With them went Pantaleone's ten knaves and Mario as *madonna's* equerry, by her insistence. Pantaleone disliked and mistrusted the silent, clay-faced servant, and would gladly have been rid of his presence. Yet he deemed it wise to humor her, at least until a priest should have given her fully into his possession.

AS THEY cantered briskly forward in the bright sunshine of that January morning and the miles were flung behind them, Pantaleone's spirits rose and conquered his last misgiving. Of treachery he had now no shadow of fear. Had she not delivered herself up to him? Were they not surrounded by men of his own? And must not the ducats and the rest follow as inevitably as the rising of to-morrow's sun? In this assurance he attempted to play the gallant, as befits a bridegroom; but he found her cold and haughty and reserved, and when he remonstrated, pointing out that she did not use him at all like one who was to be her husband by noontime, she retorted with a reminder that between them was naught but a bargain that had been struck.

This chilled him, and for a while he rode amain sulkily, with bent head and furrowed brows. But that soon passed. His abiding humor was too buoyant to suffer any permanent overclouding. Let her be as cold as ice at present. Anon he would know how to kindle her into living woman. He had so kindled a many in his day, and he was confident of his natural gifts in that direction. Not that it would greatly matter if she were to remain proof against his ardor. There were her ducats for ample consolation.

They toiled up a gentle hill, and then from its summit the gleaming ruddy roofs of Castel' della Pieve broke at last upon their view, some two leagues distant. It wanted yet an hour to noon, and if they maintained their present pace they would arrive too soon for *madonna's* schemes. Therefore she now delayed by slackening her pace a little, pleading fatigue as a result of a ride that was something arduous for one so little used to the saddle. And she contrived so well that noon was striking from the *duomo* as they rode under the deep archway of the Porta Pia and entered the town.

The duke's army was encamped upon the eastern side of the city, so that Pantaleone had no inkling of his master's presence there until they had entered the main street and saw the abundant evidences of it in the soldiers that thronged everywhere, chattering in all the dialects of middle Italy. The part he had played at Pievano had so isolated Pantaleone from the outside world that he had remained without precise knowledge of Cesare Borgia's whereabouts. His sudden realization that he had ridden almost into the very presence of the duke was as a shower of cold water upon his heated body. For you will understand that, engaged as he was, he had every reason to avoid the duke as he would avoid the devil.

He reined in sharply, and his eyes glared mistrustfully at *madonna*, instinctively feeling that here was some trap into which, like a fool, he had been lured by this white-faced girl. It flashed across his mind that it had been his lifelong practise to mistrust lean women. Their very leanness was in his eyes an outward sign of their lack of femininity, and a woman that lacks femininity—as all the world knows—is as often as not a very devil.

"By your leave, *madonna*," said he grimly, "we will seek a priest elsewhere."

"Why so?" she asked.

"Because it is my will," he snarled back.

She smiled a crooked little smile. She was calm and mistress of herself.

"It is early yet to impose your will upon me, and if you are overinsistent now, perhaps you never shall—for I marry you at Castel' della Pieve or not at all."

He looked at her, blenching with anger.

"God's blood!" he swore, and gave tongue to that thought of his. "I never yet knew a lean woman that was not sly and a very bag of devil's tricks. What is in that mind of yours?"

And then, suddenly, a hoarse voice hailed him, and from among the passers-by there rolled forward a grizzled-haired veteran upon sturdy bowed legs, a swarthy one-eyed fellow who creaked and clanked as he walked, being all mail and leather. It was Valentino's captain, Taddeo della Volpe.

"Well returned, my Pantaleone!" he cried. "The duke named you but yesterday, wondering how you fared."

"Did he so?" said Pantaleone, since he

must say something, raging inwardly to find his retreat cut off by this encounter.

The veteran rolled his single eye in the direction of Madonna Fulvia.

"Is this the prisoner you were sent to capture?" quoth he, and Pantaleone could not be sure that he was not being mocked. "But I delay you. You'll be for the duke. I'll go with you."

Now, here was Pantaleone in desperate straits. Mechanically he moved forward with Taddeo, since to obey his very natural impulse and turn about to retreat by the way he had come was now utterly impossible. Nor could he question *madonna* as he desired to do while Della Volpe stalked there beside him.

A dozen paces brought them to the open space before the *duomo*, and there Pantaleone grew cold with fear to find himself almost face to face with Cesare Borgia himself, who rode amid a group of courtiers followed by a file of men-at-arms from whose lances fluttered the banderoles with the Borgia device of the red bull.

He was in the trap. He had been led into it by the nose like a fool by this whey-faced Orsini girl, and he lacked even the strength to brace himself against the snapping of its springs. As he checked his horse mechanically in his dismay, Madonna Fulvia dealt her own a cut across the hams that launched it forward as from a catapult.

"Justice!" she cried, brandishing above her head what looked like a short truncheon. "Lord Duke of Valentino, justice!"

There was a commotion in the magnificent group about his Highness. The wild bound of her horse had brought her almost into the midst of it.

The duke raised his hand, and the cavalcade came to a sudden halt. His splendid eyes swept over her, and there was something in his glance that seemed to scorch her.

She beheld now for the first time this man, the enemy of her house, one whom she had come to consider a very monster. He was dressed in black, in the Spanish fashion, his doublet scrolled with golden arabesques, his velvet cap laced with a string of smoldering rubies large as sparrow's eggs. From under this the wave of his bronze-colored hair fell to his shoulders. The delicate yet essentially male beauty of his young face was such that for a moment it checked her cruel purpose.

A smile, gentle, almost wistful, broke upon that noble countenance, and he spoke in a voice that was soft and full of melody.

"What justice do you seek, *madonna*?"

To combat the sweet seduction of his face and voice she had need in that hour to be-think her of her cousins strangled at Assisi, of those other kinsmen jailed in Rome and like to die, and of her own lover, Matteo, in peril of capture and death. What, then, if this man were a very miracle of male beauty? Was he not the enemy of her race? Did he not seek Matteo's life? Had he not set that foul hound of his to track Matteo down?

Upon the unuttered answer to those unuttered questions she braced herself, steeled her resolve and held out the tube she carried.

"It is all set down here, Magnificent, in this petition."

He moved his horse forward some paces from amid his attendant courtiers, and without haste put forth his gauntleted hand to receive the thing she proffered. He balanced it in his palm a moment, as if weighing it, considering. It was a hollow cane, sealed at both ends. A faint smile moved his lips under cover of his auburn beard.

"Here are great precautions," was his gentle comment, and his eyes stabbed her with questions.

"I would not have it polluted on its way to your august hands," she explained.

His smile broadened. He inclined his head as if to acknowledge the courtliness of her speech. Then his glance went beyond her and rested on the scared and savage Pantaleone.

"What fellow is that who is skulking there behind you?" said he. "You there!" he called. "Old! Approach!"

PANTALEONE gave a nervous hitch to his reins and walked his horse forward. His bronzed face was pallid, his glance furtive and uneasy; indeed, extreme uneasiness was writ large in every line of him. Cesare's brows were faintly raised.

"Why, Messer Pantaleone!" he cried. "You are well returned, and most opportunely. Here, break me these seals and read me the parchment this tube contains."

There was a sudden stir of interest in the gay flock of attendants, which quickened when Madonna Fulvia intervened.

"No, no, Magnificent!" Her voice was

sharp with a sudden anxiety. "It is for your eyes alone."

He pondered her white face until she felt as she would faint under his regard, such was the terror with which it was beginning to inspire her. He smiled with a sweetness as ineffable as it was terrible, and he addressed her in his silkiest accents.

"Since beholding you, *madonna*, my eyes are something dazzled. I must borrow Ser Pantaleone's, there, and be content to employ my ears." Then, to Pantaleone, on a sudden note of sharp command, "Come, sir," he said; "we wait."

Pantaleone, a little dazed by his terror, took the thing in his shaking hands, and not daring to demur or show hesitation, broke one of the seals with clumsy, fumbling fingers. A silken cord protruded from the tube. He seized it to pull forth the parchment; then with a sharp exclamation he drew back his hand as if he had been stung—as indeed he had been. There was a speck of blood on his thumb and another on his forefinger.

Madonna Fulvia shot a fearful glance at Valentino. She saw here the miscarriage of her crafty plan, through the one factor which she had left out of consideration—the circumstance that Cesare Borgia, living and moving in an environment of treachery, amid foes both secret and avowed, took no chances of falling a victim either to their force or their guile. She had not reckoned that he would appoint Pantaleone in this matter to an office akin to that filled at his table by the venom-taster.

"Come, come!" The duke was admonishing the hesitating Pantaleone more sharply now. "Are we to wait here in the cold all day? The petition, man!"

Desperately Pantaleone now grasped the cord, taking care this time to avoid the thorn that accident or design—and he did not greatly care which, since he counted himself lost in any case—had lodged in the strands of the silk. He drew forth a cylinder of parchment, let fall the cane that had contained it, unrolled the petition with shaking hands and studied it a while, his brow wrinkled by the effort, for he was an indifferent scholar.

"Well, sir? Will you read?"

Precipitately he responded to that command, and fell to reading aloud, his voice hoarse.

"MAGNIFICENT: By these present I make appeal to you for justice against one who has proved as treacherous to you in the performance of the task to which you set him as was treacherous that task itself——"

He broke off abruptly, looking up with the wild eyes of a hunted thing.

"It—it is not true!" he protested, faltering. "I——"

"Who bade you judge?" Cesare asked. "I bade you read; no more. Read on, then."

Under the suasion of that imperious will, Pantaleone bent his eyes to the parchment again and pursued his reading.

"Believing that Matteo Orsini, whom he was bidden to arrest, is in hiding at Pievano, he has consented to connive at his escape and thus betray your trust in him upon the condition that I become his wife and my dowry his possession——"

Again he broke off.

"By the eyes of God, it is false—as false as hell!" he cried.

"Read on!" The duke's voice and mien were alike terrible.

Dominated once more, Pantaleone returned yet again to the parchment.

"Escape may or may not be for Matteo, but at least there can be no escape for you who read, by the time you have read thus far. We have another guest at Pievano in our lazaret-house there—the smallpox. And these present have lain an hour upon the breast of one who is dying of it, and——"

On a sudden outcry of terror, Pantaleone brought his reading abruptly to an end. The plague-laden parchment floated from his hands that were suddenly turned limp. It reached the ground, and there was a sudden, alarmed movement on all sides to back away beyond the radius of its venom.

DULLY through Pantaleone's benumbed wits the realization thrust itself that the thorn in the silk had been no accident. It had been set there of intent, so that it might open a way by which the terrible infection would travel the more swiftly and surely into the reader's veins. Ashen-faced, he stared straight before him, what time indignation and horror found voice on every side, and continued clamant until the duke raised an imperious hand to demand silence.

He alone remained unmoved, or at least showed no outward sign of such anger as he may have felt. When next he addressed the white-faced lady who had made this

desperate attempt upon his life, his voice was as smooth and silken as it had been before, his returning smile as sweet. And, perhaps because of that the doom he pronounced, was the more awful.

"Of course," he said, "since Ser Pantaleone has fulfilled his part of the bargain, you, *madonna*, will now fulfil yours. You will wed him as you undertook."

Wide-eyed, she stared, and it was a long moment ere she understood the poetic justice that he meted out to her. When at last her voice came, it came in a hoarse cry of horror.

"Wed him! Wed him! He is infected——"

"With your venom," Cesare cut in crisply. And he continued calmly, as one reasoning with a wayward child: "It is your duty to yourself and him. You are in honor bound by your compact. The poor fellow could not foresee all this. You had not made him privy to your plans."

HE WAS mocking her. She perceived it, and rage surged through her at the ruthless cruelty of it. She had ever heard that he was pitiless, but in no imagining of hers could she ever have conceived a pitilessness to compare with this. Her sudden surge of anger heartened her a little, yet it lent her no words in which to answer him, for, in truth he was unanswerable—his justice ever was, wherefore men hated him the more.

"You called to me for justice, *madonna*," he reminded her. "Thus you receive it. I hope it satisfies you."

"Oh, not that—not that!" she cried to him. "Mercy! Mercy! As you would hope for mercy in your need, have mercy on me now!"

He looked sardonically at Ser Pantaleone, who sat his horse, benumbed in body and in brain.

"*Madonna Fulvia* does not flatter you, Pantaleone," said he. "She has little fancy for you as a bridegroom, it appears. Yet, fool, you believed her when she promised to take you to husband. You believed her. Ha! What was it Fra Serafino said of you?" He fell thoughtful. "I remember. He found you too full in the lips to be trusted with a woman. He knows his world, Fra Serafino. A cloister is a good coign of observation. So you succumbed to

her promises! But be comforted. She shall fulfil them where she thought to cheat you. She shall take you to that white breast of hers—you and the plague you carry with you."

"O God!" she panted. "Will you wed me to death?"

"Is it possible," he wondered, "that you can find death more repulsive than Pantaleone? Yet consider," he begged her, reasoning dispassionately, "that I do naught by you that you would not have done by me." He began with infinite caution to peel off the heavy gauntlet of buffalo-hide with which he had handled that death-dealing tube. "After all," he resumed, "if to keep your word is beyond measure odious to you—a family trait with you, *madonna*, as I have cause to know—I may show you the way to escape its consequences."

She looked at him, but there was no hope in her glance.

"You mock me!" she cried.

"Not so. There is a way that some would account to be consistent with honor. Cancel the bargain that you made with him, and thus cancel the obligation to fulfil your part and to submit to his embrace."

"Cancel it? How cancel it?" she asked.

"Is it not plain? By surrendering Matteo Orsini to me. Deliver him up to me this day, and the night shall be free from nuptials that are distasteful to you."

She understood at once the satanic subtlety of this man; she saw how far removed he was from any petty vengeance such as she had suspected him to be gratifying. She was but an insignificant pawn in the deep game he played. Her feelings were to him no more than the means to the one end of which never for an instant had he lost sight—the capture of Matteo Orsini. That was all that mattered to him, and he was not to be turned aside by any considerations of anger toward herself.

"Deliver him up to you?" she said, and it was her turn to smile at last, but with infinitely bitter scorn.

"Could aught be easier?" he asked. "There is no need to tell me even where he lurks. I do not ask you to betray him, or do aught that would hurt your tender Orsini sensibilities." His sarcasm was a sword of fire. "You need but to send him word of the plight into which your essay

in poisoning has landed you. That is all. As he is a man, he must come hither to ransom you from the consequences of your deed. Let him come before nightfall, or else"—he shrugged, flung his gauntlets down into the mud and nodded his head toward the stricken Pantaleone—"you keep your bargain; you pay the price agreed upon for his escape, and myself I shall provide the nuptial banquet."

She looked at him with a deep malignity roused by his own relentlessness and by the hateful suavity in which he cloaked it. And then her wits roused themselves to do battle with his own. She saw how subtlety might yet defeat subtlety. And as the idea crept into her fevered mind, the blood came slowly back into her livid cheeks, her glance grew resolute as it met his own.

"Be it so," she said. "You leave me no choice, Magnificent." Her voice came harsh and something mocking. "It shall be as you desire. I will send my servant to him now."

He gave her a long, searching glance which at first was grave and doubting, and ended by becoming almost contemptuous. He made a sign to his cavaliers.

"Let us on, sirs. Here is no more to do." But he stooped from his saddle to issue an order in an undertone to Della Volpe, who stood beside him.

Then, flicking his horse with the slight whip which he carried, he moved on across the square, his fluttering attendants with him. He rode away with contempt in his heart. He knew this Orsini brood. They were all the same. Bold to devise, but craven to execute; their brains were stouter than their hearts. Their stiffness crumpled at the touch.

ERECT and stiff upon her horse sat Madonna Fulvia, her eyes following the duke as he rode away across the square, to vanish down the street that opened out of it. She remained thus, bemused, half dazed, indifferent to the gaping crowd that by now surrounded her, but keeping its distance out of respect for the disease with which Pantaleone was accounted laden.

She was roused at length by a groom dressed in black with a bull wrought in red upon the breast of his doublet, who stepped forward to take her reins, while

at the same time Della Volpe addressed her, his tone respectful but his single eye contemptuous.

"*Madonna*," he said, "I pray you go with us. I have my lord's commands for your entertainment."

She looked at him, sneering at first at the euphemism he had employed by which to convey to her that she was a prisoner. But something in that veteran's rugged face struck the sneer from her lips. Two things she read in that countenance—the first, that he was honest; the second, that he contemned her action. Her glance grew troubled, and it fell away from him.

"Do you lead the way, then, sir," she said. "My equerry, here, accompanies me, I think." And she indicated Mario, who sat his horse rigidly behind her, a dumb anguish in his dark eyes.

"Naturally, *madonna*, since he is to be your messenger. Forward, Giasone," he commanded, and upon that, the groom leading her horse, Della Volpe striding grimly beside her and Mario riding as grimly in her wake, she moved forward toward the Communal Palace, whither by Cesare's orders they were taking her.

As for the wretched Pantaleone, she scarce bestowed another thought upon him. He had been no more than a pawn in this game of hers, even as she was become one now in the deeper game of the duke's. He had served his miserable turn, though not quite as she had intended. In view of the resolve she had taken, it was unlikely that she would be troubled with him again.

She had observed, though with but faint interest, that a half-dozen arbalesters had charge of him. These men, under the command of an ancient, showed no relish for their task of apprehending one who was so armed that without raising a finger he could fling death about him. Accordingly, they kept their distance. They made a wide ring about their prisoner, each with a quarrel laid to his arbalest, and thus they urged him away, threatening to shoot him if he were disobedient.

When at last he had been removed in this fashion, a man in the Borgia livery came forward with a flaming torch to within a couple of yards of the pestilential parchment that still lay where it had fallen. Thence he flung his torch upon it, nor went to recover it again. Torch and plague-laden

parchment were consumed together, in spite of which, so runs the story, the good folk of Città della Pieve went wide of the spot for days thereafter.

Meanwhile, Madonna Fulvia had been conducted to the Communal, and found herself housed in a long, low-ceiled chamber of the mezzanine of the old palace, an austere room in the matter of equipment, for Città della Pieve was a modest township that had not kept pace with the luxurious development of the great Italian states.

A guard was placed outside the door, and another was set to pace beneath her windows; but at least she was given the freedom of that spacious chamber, and of course Mario was admitted to her presence, since he was to be her messenger to Matteo Orsini. The duke had judged it well that it should be so, since, to the testimony of such letters as she might write, Mario would add the confirmation of his own evidence of a fact which might be disbelieved if related by another.

Alone with his mistress, this frail child whom he had known from her cradle, the old servant now broke down completely. His grimness deserted him utterly, and the tears rolled down his ghastly furrowed face.

"*Madonna mine! Madonna mine!*" he sobbed brokenly, and held out his old arms as if he would have taken her to them, paternally to comfort her. "I warned you. I told you here was no work for such gentleness as yours. I implored you to let me do this thing in your stead. What do I matter? I am old; my life has reached its evening; my loss of a few days more would be nobody's gain. But you— O God of Pity!"

"Calm, Mario! Be calm," she bade him gently.

"Calm?" he cried. "Can I be calm when before you lies the choice between betrayal and death and—*Gesù!*—such a death? Had I carried an arbalest, I should have put a bolt through his devil's heart when he pronounced your doom—the fiend, the monster!"

"A beautiful devil he is," she said. Then she dropped her voice. "Mario!" She called him softly. Her eyes flashed to the door; then she drew still farther from it, over to the window overlooking the square, beckoning him to follow. He went silently, impressed by the mystery of her bearing.

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By the window, in lowered, murmuring accents, she addressed him.

"There may yet be a way out of this," she said. "You shall bear no letters, because you will need none. Listen now." And she gave him her commands.

By the time she had done he was staring at her, his jaw fallen. Then he stirred himself out of his amazement. He broke into protests that she was but making her ruin doubly certain; he sought to dissuade her, reminded her that it was through a disregard of his counsels that she came into her present ghastly pass and besought her not again to disregard them.

But in her headstrong way she remained unmoved, her resolve a rock upon which the torrent of his loving eloquence broke and was dissipated. And so in the end she had her way with him against his better judgment, even as last night. That there might be no mistake, she repeated all to him in brief at parting.

"And to my lord? What shall I say to my lord?" he asked.

"As little as you can, and nothing to alarm him."

"I am to lie, then."

"Even that if need be, out of charity to him."

HE DEPARTED at last, and throughout the long afternoon she sat alone in that room of the mezzanine, save for one interruption when a couple of slender vermilion striplings of the duke's household brought her food and wine in golden vessels upon salvers of beaten gold.

She drank a little of the wine, but though she had not eaten since leaving Pievano early that morning, the suffocation of suspense was upon her and she refused all food.

She sat by the window, and toward evening she saw the duke returning with his gay cavalcade. Later, as the twilight was deepening, the two vermilion pages returned to bid her in the duke's name to the supper that was spread below. She excused herself. But the pages were gently insistent.

"It is his Potency's wish," one of them informed her in a tone that quietly implied that what his Potency wished none might withstand.

Perceiving not only the uselessness of further denial but, further, that her very presence below might advance the thing

she had set herself to do, she rose and signed to the pages to lead the way. In the corridor another pair waited her, each bearing a lighted taper, who went on ahead. In this ceremonious fashion was she conducted below to the great hall, where a courtly crowd of cavaliers and ladies were assembled, making her instantly conscious—very woman that she was—of her own plain and dusty raiment, so out of place amid all this glittering splendor.

The duke himself, tall and graceful in a suit of sulphur-colored silk with silver bands at throat and waist, advanced to the foot of the stairs to receive her, bowing to her with the deference he might have used to a princess. By the hand, which she did not dream of denying him, he led her through the throng to the double doors that were thrown open upon an inner room. Here long tables were set for supper upon a dais that formed the three sides of a parallelogram.

At the table's head, in the middle of the short upper limb, he took his seat with her beside him, while those who had trooped in after them found for themselves the places that had been allotted them. It was as if the company had but waited the arrival of herself as of an honored guest, and the vengeful mockery of it stabbed her to the soul. Yet she strove that naught of this should appear, and she succeeded. White-faced, she sat between Valentinois and the portly Capello, orator of Venice, braving the curious glances that were flashed toward her from every side.

THAT room of the Communal, which in normal times was bare and cheerless as a barn, had been transmogrified under the deft hands of Cesare's familiars until none who knew its ordinary appearance could now have recognized it. You might have supposed yourself in one of the chambers of the Vatican. The walls were hung with costly arras; Byzantine carpets had been spread upon the stone floor, and the tables themselves gleamed and flashed with broi-dered naperies, vessels of gold and silver, costly crystal and massive candlesticks, in which candles of painted and scented wax were burning. Add to this that gorgeous company in silk and velvet, in cloth of gold and silver, in ermines and miniver, the women in gem-encrusted bodices and jeweled

hair-nets, the flock of splendidly liveried servants below the dais, the cloud of fluttering pages, and you will understand how Madonna Fulvia, reared far from the world of courts in the cloistral seclusion of Pievano, was dazzled by the spectacle.

From a fretted gallery above the doorway came a sound of lutes, archlutes and viols, and under cover of the music—his voice so melodious that it almost seemed to sing to it—the duke addressed her.

"I rejoice for you, *madonna*," he said, "that here is spread no nuptial feast." She looked at him, and shivered slightly as she turned away again. "It would break my heart," he pursued on that murmuring, caressing note of his that lent his voice a wooing quality; "it would break my heart to see so much beauty delivered into the arms of foul infection. Hence do I fervently pray that Matteo Orsini comes to-night."

"And for no other reason?" she asked him scornfully, stung by what seemed to her such stark hypocrisy.

He smiled, his beautiful somber eyes, enveloping her white face in their regard.

"I confess the other," he admitted; "but I swear as I am living man and worship all things lovely, the reason that I gave weighs the heavier." He sighed. "It is to save you that I pray Matteo Orsini may come to-night."

"He will come," she answered him. "Have no doubt of that."

"He owes no less to his manhood," he said quietly. Then turned his attention to more immediate matter. "You do not eat," he reproved her.

"I should choke, I think," she answered frankly.

"A cup of wine at least," he urged, and signed to a cellarer, who bore a gold vessel of soft Puglia wine. But, seeing her gesture of refusal, he put forth a hand to stay the servant's pouring. "Wait," he said, and beckoned a page to him. "A moss-agate cup for Madonna Fulvia, here," he bade the stripling, and the page vanished upon his errand.

Madonna's lip curled a little.

"There is no need for the precaution," she said—for moss-agate cups were said to burst if poison touched them. "I neither suspect venom nor do I fear it."

"So much I might have known," he

answered, "since you have displayed yourself so subtly learned in the uses of it."

He spoke quietly and gravely, but at the words she felt herself go hot and cold at once. A scarlet wave suffused her face, then ebbed, to leave it deathly pale. His words made her perhaps realize that she had no just cause for grievance; she was a poisoner caught *flagrante*, and the steely treatment he meted out to her in his silken fashion was no more than her desert.

Back came the page with the gleaming moss-agate cup, which he set down before her. The waiting cellarer brimmed it at a sign from him, and, his glance now inviting her, she drank to steady her sudden weakness.

But the meats they placed before her continued unheeded, nor did she thereafter heed the duke when he leaned aside to mock her still with that dread gentleness of his. Her staring eyes were set expectantly upon the doors at the room's end. It waxed late, and her impatience mounted. Why did they not come and thus put an end to the unbearable strain of suspense?

Came pages now with silver basins, ewers and napkins. Gallants and ladies dipped their hands and washed their fingers against the serving of the sweetmeats, and then without warning—but obeying, no doubt, the orders that the duke had left—those portals upon which *madonna's* eyes had so long been fastened swung open, and between two men-at-arms in steel she beheld her clay-faced equerry, the faithful Mario, haggard and dust-stained, returned at last.

THE hum of conversation sank down and was stilled as the sturdy fellow advanced up the long room between the tables and came, still flanked by his guards, to stand immediately before the duke. Not to the duke, however, but to Madonna Fulvia did he address himself when at length he spoke.

"*Madonna*, I have done your bidding. I have brought Ser Matteo."

A silence followed and a pause, ended at last by Cesare's short laugh.

"Body of God! Did he need bringing?"

"He did, my lord."

The duke's glance swept over the noble company.

"You hear!" he called to them, raising his voice. "You perceive the lofty spirit of these

Orsini. An Orsini must needs be brought to ransom his mistress and kinswoman from the fate decreed her." He turned to the equerry. "Fetch him hither," he said shortly, with a wave of his fine hand.

But Mario was slow to obey. Not upon the duke but upon *madonna* were his eyes set, as if waiting her confirmation of that command. She nodded; whereupon he turned and strode down the room again upon his errand and so out.

The doors closed after him, but the silence continued. No man or woman there but felt the oppression of the impending drama, but waited in suspense the climax and conclusion that were close at hand. The very minstrels in the gallery had ceased their music, and not a sound disturbed the general brooding hush.

Cesare leaned back in his high gilded chair, his slender fingers toying delicately with the strands of his auburn beard, his narrowed eyes glancing aslant at Madonna Fulvia. He found her manner very odd. It contained some quality that intrigued him and eluded his miraculous penetration.

She sat there with ashen face and wide-staring eyes. So might a corpse have sat, and a corpse you might have deemed her but for the convulsive heave of her slight bosom.

And then a sound of voices beyond the door—of voices raised in sudden altercation—broke upon the general expectancy.

"You cannot enter!" came a gruff shout. "You cannot take——"

And then they heard Mario's voice, harsh, vibrant and compelling, interrupting and overbearing the objector.

"Did you not hear the duke's express commands that I should bear Matteo Orsini to him? I have Matteo Orsini here, and I but obey his Potency's commands. Out of my way, then!"

But other voices broke in upon him, all speaking together so that they made no more than a confused and bawling chorus whose purport was not to be discerned.

Suddenly Cesare rose in his place, his eyes flaming.

"What's this?" he cried. "By the Host, am I kept waiting? Set me, wide those doors!"

There was a scurry of lacqueys to obey that imperious voice. The duke sank back into his chair as the doors were violently

pulled open. Beyond it a line of a half-dozen men-at-arms made a screen that concealed whatever lay behind them.

"My lord—" began one of these, a grizzled ancient, raising his hand in appeal.

But Cesare let him get no further. His clenched hand descended violently upon the table.

"Stand back, I say, and let him enter!"

Instantly that line of steel-clad men melted and vanished, and where it had been stood Mario now. He paused a moment on the threshold, his face set and grim. Then he stalked forward up the long room again between the tables. But no one heeded him. Every eye was fixed in amazed and uncomprehending horror upon that which followed after him.

CAME four brothers of the Misericordia in black funeral habits, their heads cowed, their eyes gleaming faintly from the eyeholes cut in their shapeless vizors. Among them they carried a bier, whose trappings of black velvet edged with silver swept the ground as they solemnly advanced.

They were midway up the room before the company broke from the spell of horror which this grim spectacle had laid upon it. A loud outcry seemed to burst from every throat at once. Then the duke leaped to his feet, and the whole company with him, and in the sudden stir and confusion none observed that Madonna Fulvia left her place at the duke's side.

The bearers halted and set down their ghastly burden. Mario stood slightly aside, lest his body should screen the bier from the eyes of the duke.

"What's this?" his Potency demanded, anger ringing in his voice. "What jest is this you dare to put upon me?" And as he spoke he swung aside to where Madonna Fulvia had been; then, finding her place now vacant, his flaming eyes swept round in quest of her, and discovered her at last standing there beside the bier.

"No jest, Magnificent," she answered him, her head thrown back, a smile of bitter, tragic triumph on her white face. "Faithful and utter compliance with your behest—no more. You commanded that Matteo Orsini should be delivered into your hands. Provided I did that, you would release me of my compact to wed your jackal, Pantaleone degli Uberti. I hold you to your

word, my lord. I have done my part. Matteo Orsini is here." And she flung an arm out and downward to indicate the bier.

He stared at her, his eyes narrowing, oddly out of countenance for one habitually so calm, so master of every circumstance.

"Here?" he questioned, and added the further question: "Dead?"

For answer she stooped and swept the velvet pall aside, laying bare the coffin underneath. That done, she faced him again, defiance in her every slender line, a ghastly smile on her pale lips.

"Bid your guards hack off the lid that you may assure yourself 'tis he. I promise you he will offer no resistance now."

Considering him, she took satisfaction in the perception that at last she had wiped that hateful, gently mocking smile from his face. He was scowling upon her, his eyes ablaze with such a passion as no man in all Italy would willingly have confronted. His hands, resting upon the table before him, were clenched so that the knuckles showed like knobs of marble.

The rest of them—the whole of that splendid company—were ranged against the walls, as far as possible from that hideous thing below. In their minds, as in Cesare's, there stirred a memory of what had befallen earlier that day—of that letter that had been infected and of the manner of that infection—and a suspicion of what was yet to follow began to form in the thoughts of all.

Thus for a spell of awful silence; then Cesare's voice rasped out a question harshly—a question that voiced in part that general and terrible suspicion:

"How died he?"

Came like a thunderbolt her answer, shrilly delivered on a high note of fierce exaltation.

"He died of the smallpox yesternight. Hack off the lid," she added. "Hack off the lid and take him!"

But that last mocking invitation which she hurled at the duke was lost in the sudden uproar in the noise of the wild stampede that followed her announcement. Mad with fear, men who had shown themselves fearless upon a field of stricken battle turned this way and that, seeking a way out. Cursing, they hurled themselves against the long windows that opened upon the little claustral garden of the Communal,

and screaming, fainting women crowded after them to avail themselves of this shortest way out that was being forced open.

It would have needed more even than the presence of that terrible duke to have restrained them in their wild panic, in their mad frenzy to breathe the clean, cold air, to quit this tainted atmosphere, to fly this hideous plague-spot. Nor did Cesare make any effort to delay their flight.

With shivering of glass and crashing of splintered timbers, those long window-doors were swept away. Out of the room headlong, as a river that has burst its dam, surged that courtly, terror-stricken mob; into it rushed the pure, keen air of the January night.

Cesare alone, at his place beyond the board, in the flickering light of wind-blown, guttering candles, remained even after the last lackey had fled, conquered by his panic. Indomitable, the duke stood there to face the woman who dared to bring a plague-ridden corpse to set at naught his authority and make a mock of his power.

"Well?" she asked him, and her laugh made him shudder, man of iron though he was. "Have you the courage to face Matteo Orsini now? Or do you lack it still, for all that he is dead?"

"Living, I never feared him!" he blazed out, unworthily, it must be confessed.

"Then you will not fear him dead," said she, and turned fiercely upon her equerry. "Here, Mario, you who have had the courage and therefore need no longer fear it, pry off this lid. Give Matteo room to strike even in death."

But the duke waited for no more. Panic took him, too; and he was known to confess to it thereafter, adding that it was the only occasion in all his life upon which he had been face to face with fear—he who so often had looked death in the eyes without quailing.

"Blood of God!" he cried, and on that fierce oath he sprang from the table and flung through the nearest window in the wake of his vanished court. Outside they heard him shouting for his horse, and they heard, too, the clamor of answering voices.

Within ten minutes he and his noble company were in the saddle, scudding through the night away from Castel' della Pieve and the dread plague it harbored.

As that thunder of hoofs receded, Madonna Fulvia, who had remained by the coffin with no word spoken, bade the men take up their burden once more. Laden with it, they passed out of that room, all littered with the now unheeded treasures that had been assembled in the duke's honor. *Madonna* and Mario walked ahead; the coffin was borne after them. They crossed the hall and quitted the palace, none hindering—indeed, all fleeing before their approach. Horses were found for herself and Mario; the bearers came on foot with their burden. Thus they took the road by the marshes back to Pievano in the dark.

WHEN they had put a league or so between themselves and Città della Pieve, she spoke for the first time.

"How was it with Giuberti to-day, Mario?" she asked.

"He died at noon, Madonna," was the answer. "God be praised, there is no other case of smallpox yet, and by His Grace there will be none. Our precautions were well taken, and they will be to the end. Colomba herself dug his grave and gave him burial deep in the enclosed garden. The lazar-house was in flames when I left Pievano, so that all source of infection may be destroyed, and Colomba herself will set up a tent in the enclosure and abide there until all danger of her carrying the scourge is overpast."

"The good Colomba shall be rewarded, Mario. We are profoundly in her debt."

"A faithful soul," Mario admitted. "But there was no risk to her, since, like myself, she, too, has paid the price of immunity."

"That cannot lessen our gratitude," she said. And then she sighed. "Poor Giuberti! God rest his loyal soul! A faithful servant ever, he has served us even in death. Heavens has blessed us in the matter of servants, Mario. There is yourself——"

"I? I am but a clod," he interrupted. "I had not the wit to trust you to-day. Had you been dependent upon my service, all must have miscarried, and heaven knows what fatality had been the end of this adventure."

"Which reminds me," said she, "that these poor fellows are unnecessarily laden. We have no pursuit to fear, and we shall make the better speed if we ease them of

their burden." She drew rein as she spoke, and Mario with her. "Enough!" she called to those cowed figures that swung along behind her. "Empty it out."

Obediently they set down the coffin, forced up the lid, tilted it over, and rolled out the load of earth and stones that it contained.

She laughed softly in the dark when this was done. But Mario shuddered.

"God and His saints be thanked he did not dare to look," he said, with fervor. "He has a reputation for high courage, and I feared— By the Host, how I feared!"

"Not more than I feared, Mario," she confessed, "but I also hoped; and if the chance was a desperate one, it was still the only chance."

At Pievano, some hours later, she found her father so racked with anxiety by her continued absence and the circumstance that Mario had come and gone again that afternoon that he had summoned the fugitive, Matteo Orsini, from his hiding-place to consult with him as to what measures should be taken.

Her appearance ended their travail of spirit, and the sight of them made an end of the fortitude that had so long upheld her. She flung herself upon her lover's breast, panting and trembling.

"You may sleep quiet now of nights, Matteo mine," she said. "He believes you dead, and fears you dead more than he could ever have feared you living." And on that she fainted in his arms, her strength of body and of spirit alike exhausted.

AND that, so far as I can discover, is the only instance in which man or woman defeated the Duke of Valentino in an encounter of wits; nor does it lessen my high opinion of his penetration, for it must surely be admitted that the dice were heavily clogged against him and that he fell a victim to a fraud rendered possible by circumstances. There is also responsible for this failure the fact that for once he did not choose his tool with that discrimination which Macchiavelli enjoins upon princes. He overlooked the significance of those excessively full lips of Pantaleone's and left unheeded the warning Fra Serafino uttered on the score of them. Or,

perhaps, on the other hand— But why speculate? I have laid the facts before you, and you may draw your own inferences.

As for Pantaleone, if he still interests you, he fared on the whole perhaps better than he deserved, though that is purely a matter of the point of view from which he is to be judged. For, as the Lord Almerico's favorite philosopher has said, a man does not choose the part he shall play in life—he plays the part that is allotted to him.

He was entirely overlooked when Cesare with all his following left Città della Pieve, and he was left there in the jail into which he had been flung until it should be ascertained whether he was to be required as a bridegroom. Anon Cesare remembered him, and was about to order him to be strangled when he learned that the fellow had developed the smallpox and had been, very properly, taken to a lazaret-house. It is recorded that, upon hearing this, the duke shuddered at the memory of his own escape, and was content to leave the rascal to the fate that had overtaken him—perhaps because he knew of no one who in the circumstances would undertake to strangle him.

Pantaleone's lusty youth stood him in such good stead that he made one of those rare recoveries from that pitiless scourge. But he came forth into the world again broken in health and strength, and no longer to be recognized for the same swaggering, arrogant captain who had sought sanctuary on that January evening at Pievano.

His career as a captain of fortune being ended, realizing that he was a broken and useless man, he dragged himself wearily back to the village of Laveno in the Bolognese, and stumbled one April morning into Leocadia's wine shop. There he flung himself upon the charity and the ample bosom of the woman whom in prosperity he had forsaken. And such is the ever-forgiving and generous nature of your true woman that Leocadia put her arms about him and wept silently in thanksgiving for his return, blessing the disease that had made him weak and hideous, since it had restored him to her.

Since it sorted well with his interest, I do not doubt that he made an honest woman of her.

The last of the three Sabatini novels which we have announced is "The Venetian," and it will appear in August EVERYBODY'S—out July 14th.

Long Distance

*If You Don't Believe That Sometimes Dreams
Come True, and That Romance is to the
Romantic, Don't Read This Story*

By Douglas Newton

Illustration by H. P. Brown

LEON PETRIE sat, indecisive, at his big drawing-desk. The telephone was there before him; he had only to stretch out his hand— He did stretch out his hand. He laughed at it. He saw it was trembling—excitement, of course, but nevertheless absurd in a grown man of precise habits.

He took his eyes from the telephone. He looked out of his windows down to where the river showed a flat and lovely blue in the evening sun. He looked at the bridge, a fairylike and romantic structure in its scaffolding. The bridge gave him courage. It was good work, fine work, strong work—and it was his.

He lifted the telephone toward him.

"Give me long distance, please," he said to the ghost of a feminine voice his action had stirred to life. Presently he said, "I want Greendowns, two three one one."

"Greendowns, two three one one!" cried an absurdly tinkling echo of his deep voice. "I'll ring you."

He sat waiting, staring at the bridge to give him courage to do this absurd, this fantastic thing. The telephone-bell's ring struck through him a sudden, sweltering panic. His left hand clenched tight and white as he lifted the ear-piece.

"Is this Greendowns, two three one one," he mumbled, with a thick, dry tongue.

"Wha' say?" came another feminine voice—a servant's voice. "Want us—Greendowns, two three one one?"

"Oh, I do!" he cried. "May I speak to

Miss—Miss—you know, the young lady of the house?"

Would that blundering piece of diplomacy succeed?

"Mean Miss Juliette, do you?"

"Of course it's Juliette—Miss Juliette! Couldn't be any other name!" he cried, for this was the first time he had heard *her* name.

"'Spose not," said the voice tartly. "Hold on; I'll fetch her."

Leon held on. His pulse was beating, but this time there was elation in it as well as other emotions. He waited sixty hours, or, anyhow, that number of seconds, when:

"Hello! Are you there? You want to speak to me?"

"Immensely!" he gasped. "It is Miss Juliette?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"That doesn't matter really. Speaking to you does." Curious how he was utterly bereft of ideas and words, now that he was really speaking to her—now that he had pulled off the incredible *coup*, and was actually, really, decisively in touch with *her*! He could only say:

"I know it's you. There aren't two voices in the world with just that er—that jolly sound. It's you!"

"I've admitted it," said the voice, with a little laugh. "And I guess you're Dick?"

He hesitated.

"Aren't you sure?"

"Well, that's just the idiot thing you'd say, Dick. And the voice is something like

—only more like a human man's than a schoolboy's. But you're disguising it, you old ass, Dick!"

"Old ass—yes," said Leon, with a sigh. "But Dick—I fear not. Doesn't my voice sound like some one you aren't likely to meet anywhere—some one who is securely located in Venezuela?"

"Are you ringing me up from Venezuela?"

"The distance is rather less, but for all practical purposes I am just as remote."

"I believe," said the distant, silvery and delicious voice—certainly Leon could not mistake that voice—"I believe you're telling me you don't know me."

"No," said Leon. "I'm telling you that you don't know *me*."

"I don't quite understand. Have I—have I ever met you?"

"In a sense, I don't suppose you have."

"In a sense!" she cried. "Does that mean that in a sense I have?"

"Well, your eyes *did* linger on me—with a woeful lack of attention, I thought. But I understood. Oh, please recognize I understood! The problem of Fifine's spring costumes was infinitely more important."

"Do you know," said the silvery voice, "I think you're no more than a nightmare. I don't know what on earth you're all about."

"Plant your feet firmly on Fifine's frocks and reconstruct from that," said Leon, getting his second wind, as it were. "You were talking of them at tea one afternoon a few weeks back at the Ritz."

"The—what?" cried the voice.

"Just the Ritz."

"You—you mean to say you saw me in the Ritz?"

"Very much, and at tea-time. You were sitting at a table for two, making cream buns look exactly like human food. You were talking of this unparalleled and mesmerizing Fifine. At the table on your left sat a youngish man of large, linear specifications—a rather rugged specimen, uncouth perhaps, shy certainly, features nothing to write home about, but with, maybe, a certain homely candor—a young man not entirely unlike four hundred thousand other young men—"

"That would be you?"

"That was me. It is me still, but I'm no longer at the Ritz, unfortunately."

"Why unfortunately?"

"Because"—Leon hesitated—"if I were, I could be doing what I did then."

The hesitation was on the other side.

"What was that?"

"Oh—neglecting my tea and staring at something—some one immensely worth while—immensely beautiful."

"Oh!" trilled the voice. "Do you really think that she is good-looking?"

"I know *you're* lovely," said Leon, with emphasis.

"Oh!" cried the voice again, a little breathlessly. "Oh—but—but you don't know if she was me at all."

"There's no mistaking the voice."

"But—but—don't you realize you might be making a deuce of a bloomer—mistake."

"I know it's you," said Leon doggedly. "I know it in my soul. There's your voice, and, then, how else am I speaking to you?"

"You mean you—you heard my name?"

"No. I mean I heard your telephone number," said Leon. "You can make a bloomer—was it?—about names, but never about a telephone number."

"But how—how—tell me——"

TIME up!" interrupted a cold, godlike voice. "Wanta 'stension?"

"Hours more!" cried Leon, and his pulse jumped as he heard another voice cry:

"No—no—don't cut us off! We want to go on."

"By Jove, we do!" thought Leon.

"Where were we?" said the silver voice. "Of course this is frightfully wrong, but——"

"Interesting—I hope. Well, I'll tell you all, as the wronged young man in the play says, before we're cut off. I was sitting, all eyes and no heart for cream buns, staring at you, wishing and wishing that I might have had the wonderful luck to know you. Trying to invent all manner of daring and absurd things that would introduce me to you——"

"Like rescuing her—this girl—me from a suddenly insane waiter running amuck with a pastry-fork?"

"Oh, you understand! Yes; mad and queer ideas like that. All the time you sat talking Fifineries with a red-haired, eager, plump little woman——"

"Who was she, I wonder?"

"You'll answer that question better than I. You called her 'Madge' ——"

"Oh, Madge Kingsley! I know her."

"You seemed to have little doubt on that score. She called you——"

"What?" cried the silver voice, with a gasp. "What did she call me?"

"Just 'darling.'" He sighed. "I admit it was appropriate, but not very satisfying to the hungry eavesdropper. Yes; I admit I eavesdropped vilely. I was absolutely unprincipled in my desire to get some clue."

"And you got the telephone number?"

"YES; but that was all. As you gathered your forty thousand parcels to depart, you discussed further meetings. Apparently you were such busy young women you could not fix up anything definite. In the end, you said: 'Well, you know where I'll be. Just ring me up. The number is Greendowns, two three one one.'"

"And then?"

"And then you vanished."

"But the name—my name—'Juliette.' You had that. How did you get it?"

"Wicked diplomacy. By pretending to have a faulty memory, I jockeyed your maid into telling me."

"And my—my surname?"

"I don't know it."

"What about the telephone-book?"

"I'm in Venezuela—well, at least one hundred and twenty miles away from you. Your telephone-book is not current here."

"So that—apart from the telephone number, I'm absolutely unknown to you?"

"Apart from that, and the perfectly fitting name of Juliette, and your voice with its particularly enticing quality, and the memory of you at the Ritz, and the very well-defined knowledge that you must be immensely worth knowing and worth talking to, and that I want to go on talking to you, and want you to give me permission to have future talks with you—apart from that—yes; you're unknown to me."

"So that's the reason for your ringing up?"

"That's the reason."

"And it wasn't to suggest another tea?"

"I'm in Venezuela, you know—unfortunately."

"Fortunately. I should have refused that."

"Then you don't refuse future conversations. I say; that's awfully good of you, Miss Juliette. If you ——"

"Wait a minute until I decide whether it

is good or bad of me. It's an extraordinary proposition. I'm afraid——"

"Before you start making me worse than afraid, do let me tell you what an absolute godsend these chats would be to me. Look here; I'm marooned bang in the middle of a most inhospitable nowhere. I'm miles from any town. There is nobody to talk to here save a gang of workmen and one or two office-men, who are as bored with my society as I am with theirs. I'm a lonely soul perched up on a cliff overlooking a river, asking you to take pity on me——"

"I like that—no; not the pity, but being perched up on a cliff. It sounds celestial. I'd like to hear about that."

"I'd like to tell you," said Leon enthusiastically. "It's a red cliff——"

"But why *should* you be dumped down in loneliness?" said the voice quickly.

"Oh—oh, I'm by way of being an engineer. There's a bridge down there under my eye, which I'm helping to build." He had a sudden fear she might take him for a draftsman or assistant. "As a matter of fact, I'm building it. It's my bridge, but the men who ram the stones and dirt into the revetments talk so assuredly of it being 'their' bridge that I've got into the habit of sharing it with others."

"That also sounds tremendously interesting."

"It is!" he cried. "I knew you'd feel it so. That's one of the reasons I want to talk and talk and talk again to you."

"Yes—but, you know, would it stop at—bridges?"

"It will stop at bridges," he said slowly, after a pause, "until you give me permission to—to talk of other things."

"That sounds like a renunciation," she said, with a sort of hesitation which he could swear was the vocal expression of a blush.

"I'll be frank with you," he said. "It is. But I am commanded by you."

"Do you know——" she said. Then she paused, then went on rapidly: "It's all so absurd! You've got hold of such a wrong idea. I don't know what I ought to say——"

"Oh!" he said mournfully. "I had hoped I had persuaded you——"

"Time up——" began a voice.

"Seven o'clock each evening is the best time to ring up," said the silvery voice quickly.

"Can't have'n extension," said the goddess of the exchange.

"I'll remember. Good-by!" shouted Leon.

"*Au revoir*," said Juliette.

"It's really splendid of you, Miss Juliette," began Leon at seven the next day.

"There are other ways of looking at it," her clear voice said. "'Shocking' is the word quite a number of people would use. But it's done now. By the way, I think some sort of name to your voice would make you less disembodied."

"Of course!" he cried. "My name is Leon——"

"Leave it at 'Leon.' As my own surname is anonymous, it is only fair. I've been thinking quite a lot about your eyry on the cliff——"

"I've been thinking of nothing but you."

"That," she said, but not too severely, "isn't at all bridgy, and we agreed to confine ourselves to bridges. Tell me about yours?"

"Well, it's a bridge. I have a secret suspicion that it is a lovely and marvelous bridge. There are some people who only think it a railway bridge that cuts off twenty miles of an old loop round this rather broad, shallow and blue river, thereby saving much money in coal and haulage and other mundane things. But to me it is something more than that. I think it is a beautiful, strong thing, with grace in every girder, stanchness in every pier. I like to see it grow tie by tie, section upon section, span by span. It's like the growth of something human."

"It's your child," she said, and he felt her soft smile.

"You *do* understand!" he cried. "Of course it's a very useful bridge, besides the things I see in it, and will serve a noble purpose. It's a unique bridge in its way. We've had some difficulties to face—a queer lift on the right bank of this blue, broad river I look down on. That lift made several eminent engineers swear we couldn't build the bridge. But we have. Then there have been bad bottoms in the sand-banks that nearly caused a disaster with one of our piers, and then storm-water coming down and charging headlong at our puny work, as though nature intended to brush such an impertinence right away,

has meant a lot of trouble. It's been a fight."

"You sound like a fighter," she said. "Tell me more about your work."

He told her. It was easy to tell her. He could see her quick, fragile, glowing beauty thrilling with animation—even though she was over one hundred miles away by 'phone. But he knew she was thrilled, and that she saw the romance of doing tremendous things in a big way. He knew by the instinct within him, by the tone of her softly, silvery voice, by the acute and interested questions she asked. He seemed to have only started talking when the slightly nasal goddess of the exchange intervened.

"**L**OOK here, Juliette"—they had arrived at "Leon" and "Juliette"—he said one day; "you've let me talk and talk about myself with never a word about you."

"We weren't to stray from bridges," she said, and then, with just a sigh, "In any case, I don't matter very much."

"You matter tremendously," he insisted. "Please, will you drop bridges, Juliette?"

"Yes. But bridges are more interesting. That splendid life you lead, Leon, is more interesting. It is a great breath from the outer world."

"What? The talk of a man set down in a wilderness?"

"Your wilderness is less lonely than mine, Leon. I'm only a little house mouse, you know. I am shut up in this house as though in a cage, and all I see of life is the larder, so to speak, and the four walls."

"But you see the Ritz occasionally."

"The Ritz?" she echoed.

"You were at the Ritz when I saw you the first and only time."

There was quite a long pause.

"Oh, I'd—I'd forgotten that," the soft voice stammered. "I ought to have—I ought to have—" The tone steadied. "I can't— That is, the few visits to town I have made don't count." The voice went on rapidly, as though pleading. "You'll understand why I welcomed these talks with you—wanted them—when I tell you that you are less lonely than I, Leon. You have your men and your work and your marvelous bridge. I have nothing. I live here with my father, who is a scholar. He is so preoccupied with his books of philosophy that I do not count to him. This is a



He looked toward the door and gasped. A young girl stood there, a girl definitely and delightfully younger than the girl of the Ritz.

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lonely house, and there are practically no callers. I live virtually-alone, day in and day out alone."

"But, Juliette, it's hard to believe that. That day at the Ritz——"

"Oh, forget that day at the Ritz!" she cried. "It's given you an entirely wrong idea of me. That girl you *saw* at the Ritz wasn't me—wasn't the me who lives here. Please do get me straight, Leon. I'm a little, shy mouse of a creature; I always have been. That's why I am the one who stayed at home. There were three of us girls, you know, and I was always Cinderella. Things were put on me—oh, just naturally, because I was—am—quiet and homy and rather dreamy and bookish. None of the boys noticed me—that was because I was younger and less vivid than the others, and because I was shy and because I instinctively kept in the background. I always have been there. My sisters married and left me behind as if it were the most natural thing in the world for me to be left behind."

"Poor kid!" said Leon softly.

"Oh, you understand, too," she said. "You see that I didn't really like being left in the background, being a queen of domestic virtues—and nothing else. At first I don't think I minded. The sort of boys that called did not seem to me to be the kind to be enthusiastic about. But later I got scared. Life was becoming dangerously lonely. I was out of it all in this backwater. I began to fear that it was going to pass me by." Suddenly she broke off. "Oh, but all this sounds like the confession of a homely old spinster of plain features and demeanor——"

"I know you're not that," he said quickly. "I know how beautiful you are."

"You know?" she cried.

"Didn't I stare at you at the Ritz?"

"Oh, that! Well, yes; that would tell you something of me. And my glass tells me——"

"And I tell *you*," he said, with a touch of passion, "that life is *not* going to pass you by—that you were made for big things, for joy, for happiness——"

"Oh!" she protested faintly. "Don't forget the subject's bridges."

"Bridges! Don't you see that you are part of my bridge-building, Juliette, that you help and inspire. That you and I——"

"No—no!" she gasped. "I can't listen. I'm ringing off. Good-by!"

THEN two eternal days went by. On the third,

"It is you—it is you, Leon?" came her voice, husky with anxiety. "Oh, Leon, I thought—I thought— Oh, why didn't you ring up yesterday and the day before?"

"Sorry, Juliette, my dear," he said, and his voice was hoarse. "I couldn't. I wanted to, but I couldn't. There's been a little trouble at the bridge. I couldn't get away."

"The bridge!" she cried. "Oh, it's only that! No; that's cruel to you. I did not mean to say anything nasty about the dear bridge. It was—I thought——"

"I understand, Juliette. No; I wasn't huffed at your ringing-off."

"You always do understand, Leon. And the bridge—I'm really afraid about the bridge now. Is it all right?"

"Quite all right. There was nothing really grave—properly handled. Some girders slipped while they were being put into the middle span. Until we could get them in place there was a strain on the whole fabric. It was all trying and worrying—but it's all over now. We can——"

"Leon"—her cry was urgent—"your voice is strange! You're tired, weak. Oh, Leon, is there anything wrong?"

"No—no! Don't worry. I'm all right. Just a little tired—that's all. We were hard at it while it lasted, you know. But now, just hearing your voice makes me as vigorous as a lion again."

"You *are* tired. I can hear it in your voice. You were hard at it while it lasted. Leon, that means you haven't had any rest in the last two days. Have you even been to bed—or lain down at all?"

"Well, you see——"

"Tell me! Tell me!"

"I'm afraid—not."

"Then you're going straight to bed—*now*!"

"But, Juliette, not just as I'm beginning to talk to you. You don't know how I've ached for this moment."

"Don't I? Can't I have any—feelings?"

"Juliette—you mean——"

"Leon, I mean you to go to bed."

"But I can't possibly—not now."

"But won't it be nice of you to go—for

me? Aren't we one in—in understanding, Leon? Go straight to bed."

"But Juliette dearest——"

"It's just as long for me until to-morrow. Good-by, dear. Go to bed."

"I RESTED like a giant, and I feel like two men— Three, now that you're on the 'phone."

"Yes; you sound better, Leon. How is your arm?"

"What?"

"That slipped out. But, then, the secret of you is out. Yes; I know it—the world knows it. Don't you get the papers down there—in Venezuela, Leon Petrie?"

"Damn!"

"No; that isn't the word, really. I was rather thrilled, and—and *why* did you say your features were nothing to write home about?"

"Eh? What's that? What do you know about my features, Juliette?"

"Almost everything, I think. I've been studying five separate versions of them in three separate papers, and—and I don't think you are quite as repulsive as you made out. Also, there are the other things you forgot to tell me. Why didn't you mention that when the girders fell into the river——"

"There's one thing I didn't and couldn't mention, Juliette," said Leon swiftly. "That is that this mess-up has meant leave for me. Leave for me—do you understand? I've got a month's holiday to spend where I like. Did you hear that?"

"Oh!" she cried, as though taken aback. "You've got a holiday! You can go where you like——"

"And," he said firmly, "you know exactly where I'd like to go."

"Yes," she breathed; "yes. But I've got to think. And—and, Leon, aren't you trying to draw the reddest of red herrings across the conversation? Why didn't you tell me that when the girders fell a man was pinned by them in the water, and that he might have been drowned if you had not gone to him along a shaky structure liable to collapse and crush you at any moment, and that you held his head above the water in spite of a dangerous current until——"

"Oh! Oh! They've got all that, have they? How the newspapers do poke about into things!"

"They do—bless them! Perhaps they knew how proud their readers—one reader, at least—would be. There's also the story of how you worked like a giant, and how at terrible personal risk—risk so personal that your arm was broken—you worked amid your men, inspiring them, so that your bridge was saved——"

"Well," he said slowly, "it was my bridge—*our* bridge, Juliette, and it had to be saved—and aren't you manipulating that proverbial red herring, too, my dear? Aren't you trying to obscure the fact that I have a holiday, and I am asking you to invite me to Greendowns?"

"Leon, I'm a coward. I'm afraid. I—I feel I dare not—not risk it."

"You—you darling! What risk is there?" Pause. "And it's got to be. I must see you again. It's got to be!"

"Yes," she sighed; "it's got to be. Leon, what dress did—did that girl—did I wear at the Ritz? Was it a golden-brown silk with fur trimmings, with a little brown hat with an orange feather?"

"Yes; that was the dress. But what on earth——"

"I thought it must be. Oh, I'm grateful! I—I'll meet you in that. When you leave the station at Greendowns, walk to the right to the crossroads. Take the Small Dole road and climb the hill, and I shall meet you on it. Now tell me the day and I'll give you your train."

He told her the day and she gave him his train. And then she said:

"And, Leon, don't be disappointed in me. If you are, go away without showing it and never—never 'phone to me again. I'll understand."

"I won't be disappointed in you."

"Don't be certain." She sighed. "You never know. A—a girl at the Ritz isn't always the same as a girl at home."

The girl, slim, fragile, exquisite, turned about when they entered the lounge of the house at Greendowns. She faced Leon, and he saw that her lip was trembling, that her deep eyes were dark with anxiety.

"Well?" she whispered.

"Juliette!" he cried softly. "But it's—it's amazing!"

"How—amazing?" she faltered.

"Well, you're so—so different."

"Disappointing?" she said, and her hand went quickly to her young breast.

"Disappointing!" he cried, "Good heavens. It's—it's the other thing. The girl at the Ritz was only a shadow of you. I can't grip it. You seem younger, gentler, sweeter——"

"And as pretty?"

"Pretty!" he cried. "You were pretty then—yes; but now you're *lovely*!"

"Leon," she cried, and a delicious color flooded her exquisite face; "Leon, you really mean that?"

"Mean it? Why, my dear, can't you see I'm—I'm almost afraid of your loveliness? Somehow, I don't dare dwell on my good fortune."

She came to him swiftly, rested her hand on his arm.

"It was I who ought to be afraid. I'm not now. And you needn't be, Leon." He moved. "Wait"—she smiled at him—"wait just ten minutes."

SHE went out swiftly and he waited. He was filled with a bewilderment of wonder. He had prepared himself to find her a little less a goddess than his dreams had pictured. Dreams are dangerous and cruel things that have a knack of idealizing one's dream-love beyond the hope of human competition. He had been stern with himself—had told himself that it wouldn't be fair to her to expect her, or any woman, to be as beautiful as the creature his fancy had painted.

And here she was, infinitely more beautiful!

He couldn't quite understand it. She seemed different, and beyond the girl of the Ritz. She had a daintiness, a delicacy, a sense of being unspoiled by the world that the girl of the Ritz had not had. The girl of the Ritz had been pretty in an alluring but, at the same time, worldly and self-assured way. But pretty as she had been, she was but a faint echo of this girl, the girl she was now. Queer how he should think of her as a different being!

A voice said softly, timidly,

"Leon!"

He looked toward the door and gasped.

A young girl stood there, a girl definitely and delightfully younger than the girl of the Ritz, than the girl she had just been. She wore a simple frock, the frock that a girl just out of her teens would wear in the

country. Her hair was more simply arranged, and it suited her better. She had an air of gentle, modest innocence, a freshness and loveliness that simply put the Ritz girl out of court. He sprang up.

"Juliette!" he said, almost in awe. "That is—is it Juliette?"

"Yes," she said. "This is Juliette—the real Juliette at last. Is she——"

"Yes!" he almost shouted. "She's adorable! She's streets ahead of the girl just now. Is she the same girl?"

"The same girl." She smiled. "But in her own dress."

"But that other dress, that Ritz dress——"

"That was Margot's—my sister's. Leon, I've never been to the Ritz."

"Never been to—" He stared at her. "But I see that, my dear. It wasn't you I saw there. It was that dress, and—and was it your sister Margot?"

"Yes; it was Margot. I'll tell you how it was, Leon. Margot gave that telephone number to Madge Kingsley because she was coming down here to stay. She spends a fortnight here every year. She had gone, leaving behind this dress, as she had got something smarter from Ffine's, when you rang up. That was why the servant thought naturally of me only when you—you diplomatically fished for a name to put to the Ritz girl. And then, when I talked to you—at first I couldn't make out what you were driving at, and then it struck me as intriguing—interesting. And then, as you talked, it was like getting a breath of clean wind from the big world into this stagnant little backwater. I was thrilled. And I was so lonely, cut off— And then I couldn't give it up——"

"Thank God!" said Leon quietly.

"But, Leon, I let you think——"

"My dear," he said softly, "you let me go on thinking that the reality was less wonderful than you. That's the only thing I have got against you. You let me go on holding that vague memory of the Ritz girl, while all the time I might have been thinking of you."

"And you're not—you're not——"

And Leon showed her what he was not, and what he was. He took her in his arms—or, rather, he did it as well as one sound arm would let him. And that was very well, indeed.

Adventures A-plenty in a Search for Treasure

The **Bucoleon Treasure**

Two of the Searchers, by a Clever Ruse, Gain Access to the Site of the Palace and Spot the Probable Location of the Treasure. Then Things Begin to Happen

By Arthur D. Howden Smith

Illustrations by Ralph Pallen Coleman

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

IT WAS at Piræus that the four of us parted—Nikka and I, John Nash, to go to Salonica, whence we would journey by train to Seres, and there join Nikka's uncle, Wasso Mikali, and his band of Gipsies, and so make our way in the guise of horse-traders to Constantinople; Hugh Chesby and Watkins, the faithful valet, to proceed direct by sea to the city on the Bosphorus, where they would find my archeologist uncle, Vernon King, and his daughter Betty, and wait for us.

Thus, as Nikka expressed it, we would "split the scent"—a most necessary precaution, for it would be hard to imagine any more persistent and ferocious hounding than that to which we were being subjected.

We were after the Treasure of the Bucoleon, and so, unfortunately, was an organized band of desperate international criminals with many Gipsy members, for the tradition of it had lived through the ages with those people, who knew, too, that the secret of the location of the vast wealth amassed by the Emperor Andronicus Comnenus by rapine and extortion and buried by him in the Bucoleon Palace was, through the emperor's friendship for Hugh's

Crusading ancestor, in possession of the Chesby family. The written information as to where this treasure was had long been lost, and it was only recently that Hugh's uncle had found it. But he had paid for his discovery with his life, and he had died breathing the name "Toutou" as that of his assassin, and mentioning a gang of which one Tokalji was also a member.

Hugh, who succeeded his uncle as Lord Chesby, found the estate so hopelessly involved that he, too, decided to search for the treasure, and his two war-time comrades, myself and Nikka Zaranko, a famous Gipsy violinist, embarked with him on the fascinating adventure.

After a period spent at Chesby Castle, during which we had several thrilling encounters with Toutou's gang, we finally got hold of the document on account of which the late baron had forfeited his life. It seemed to indicate that the goal of our endeavors lay beneath a red stone near the Fountain of the Lion in an inner court of the Bucoleon Palace. This vast pile, we knew, had been almost completely razed and overbuilt, but Nikka recalled a story told by his father, who had been king of the Balkan

Gipsies, that a certain Gipsy tribe in Constantinople had long guarded the supposed site of the treasure.

We set out for Turkey. Two of the criminal gang were on the train from Paris to Marseilles, and I had quite a lively time with them. One was the redoubtable Toutou himself, and the other a dark woman of Latin type, who spoke like an American and called herself Hélène de Cespedes. They lured me into a compartment, bound and gagged me, and made a thorough search for any clue to the information they knew we must possess. But we had been too smart for them. We had memorized the location of the treasure, and then sent a copy of the memorandum to Betty King, with instructions to post it to herself, *Poste Restante*, and it would thus lie in the post-office, the safest place we could think of. We had no wish for publicity, and so never had appealed to the police for protection.

We got to Piræus without further mishap and then, as I have said, divided our forces in order further to confound pursuers, for we did not doubt that Toutou and his friends were hot on our trail.

AT SALONICA we entered a Europe which was new to me—a Europe which was blended with the life and color and form of the Orient. Tall minarets, like fingers of Doom, pointed skyward over bulbous domes, and, driving to the railway station between rows of shabby houses that had replaced an area ravaged by fire, we heard the high-pitched, wailing call of the muezzin. All the races of the Near East swarmed and crowded and cursed and pushed along the untidy sidewalks.

"This is No Man's Land," said Nikka, as our dilapidated automobile forced a slow progress through the congested traffic. "All races here hate one another. We are two hundred years behind western Europe. Here treachery is the rule. Might is right. The strong hand takes all. Women are inferior beings—save among my own race." His thin face lit with a smile. "Many things can be said against my people, but we give our women freedom. Yet over us, as over all the other peoples, still hangs the shadow of Islam."

At the station we fought for places in a first-class compartment which had room for six and must accommodate eight. The

second- and third-class cars were jammed to the doors. Women wept; children howled, and men swore and struck each other and their women indiscriminately.

It was a dreadful journey, not long as regards distance, but tediously protracted in time. The country grew steadily more mountainous as we left the coast. The engine panted and heaved; the cars rattled and shook. But the locomotive toiled on, and in the full tide of hours we crawled over a mountain ridge and saw the sun rising in the east beyond the close-packed roofs of Seres.

Nikka commandeered a cab in the station square.

"Do you know the house of Kostabidjian, the money-lender?" he asked the driver in Greek that sounded more than passable to me. "Very well, then; drive us there."

"Who is Kostabidjian?" I inquired curiously, as the driver whipped up his horses.

"He is the agent of the tribe," Nikka replied shortly.

"What—"

"It was through him I sent word to my uncle."

I held my peace after that. We drove for half an hour into the northeastern suburbs, where the houses became little villas, with courtyards and small gardens, and sometimes orchards behind. At last we stopped at a gateway overhung by olive trees, and the driver got down to pull the bell-wire which protruded from an opening by the gate. The solemn clangor echoed faintly and was succeeded by shuffling footsteps. A wicket opened, and a dark, be-whiskered face was revealed. Nikka ejaculated a single sentence in the Gipsy dialect, and the gate swung ajar. I gave the driver of the cab a couple of drachmas and followed Nikka inside.

The individual with the whiskers, a dried-up, elderly man, quickly fastened the gate again, with a sidewise look at Nikka, half respect, half fear. The courtyard was empty save for some ponies and mules under a shed at the rear, and the custodian—whose tongue had been cut out in some massacre of the past—motioned to us to follow him to the house.

At the door he stood aside and ushered us into a parlor furnished in the French style. Off it opened a dining-room. A stout, smooth-faced elderly man rose from

a desk as we entered. He started to salaam, thought better of it and offered his hand, which Nikka grasped perfunctorily. Then he began to speak in the Tzigane dialect, but Nikka cut him off.

"Speak French," he said curtly. "I have no secrets from my friend, Mr. Nash." And, to me: "This is Monsieur Kostabidjian. It was to him I sent the telegram from Marseilles, with instructions to communicate with my uncle."

Kostabidjian bowed to me.

"My poor home is honored, indeed, by two such distinguished guests," he declared. "Monsieur Zaranko, it is many years now since I had the pleasure of meeting you, but you will find that I have executed all your commissions faithfully."

Nikka smiled sarcastically.

"You would not be alive and whole if you had not," he commented.

"Surely you do not mean that you think I would do anything else!" cried Kostabidjian.

"I mean I am sure that you do as I command," returned Nikka impatiently. "Also, that I feel I do not have to rely upon your honesty in the matter. Now, what news have you for me?"

Kostabidjian—he was an Armenian of uncertain parentage, I afterward discovered, with the ingrained servility pounded into that unfortunate race by centuries of oppression—drew up chairs for us.

"The telegram was sent forward at once to the chief," he answered. "But Wasso Mikali sent back word yesterday that he would be delayed in waiting upon you in consequence of a caravan of cartridges which the tribe are running into Albania. It is an affair which has attracted his attention for the past month, and he dare not trust the work to another."

"Does he himself go to Albania?"

"No, Monsieur Zaranko. But the starting of the caravan and the paying of the purchase-price——"

"In advance?"

"Of course!"

"Good!" said Nikka. "When will he be here?"

"He spoke of to-morrow."

"Then serve us food and lead us to a room where we may rest."

No prince could have been more arrogant; no lackey could have succumbed more ab-

jectly. The Armenian attended noiselessly to our wants, and then retired to cower over his mysterious accounts in the next room. Nikka sat through the meal with a black frown on his face. He was plainly out of sorts, and while I could understand his aversion to Kostabidjian, I was secretly amazed by the constantly growing change in his manner, for he was normally of a pleasant disposition. But it was not until we had been shown to a bedroom on the upper floor that he unmasked his feelings.

I BEGAN to undress, but he paced the room restlessly from wall to wall. Suddenly he turned to me, his face contorted by inward strife.

"I'm having a hell of a time, Jack," he groaned. "The two selves in me are wrenching at my soul. There's Nikka, the Gipsy freebooter, who has been dead for years, and against him fights Nikka, the artist and man of the town. Neither of them owns me. Until the other day—except now and then when the old self reared its head temporarily—I thought I had thrust the Gipsy behind me. But I was a fool to think so, Jack. God, what a fool! Why, the music in me always was Gipsy!"

"And I thought I had submerged it—drowned it. I thought I was like you and Hugh. I know better now. Since we started east I have felt these half-dead instincts rising up in me, clutching at my soul, tormenting my intelligence. The hunger for the open road, contempt for order and law, the mastery of my own will—all these things call to me. And yet, Jack, I am ashamed. I feel ashamed to bring you here, to have you meet the fellow downstairs, who, when all is said and done, is the agent through whom my people dispose of what they steal and smuggle."

"For that's the truth, Jack. My people are not like Toutou's gang. But they are Gipsies. They live by their own hands, and every man's hand is against them. They make their own laws and abide by their own customs. They take what they need and consider it their due. Kostabidjian spoke of my uncle's running cartridges to Albania. I know what it means. After the war there were vast stocks of ammunition scattered all over the Balkans, treasure-trove to such wild peoples. The Allies ruled that it

should be surrendered or destroyed. But do you suppose it was? Never! It was stolen, hidden and smuggled. I would swear that my tribe has sold it to Kemal Bey, to the Russian Soviets. Now the Greeks and the Serbs are pressing down on the Albanians, and my uncle sells to the Albanians. If he can, too, he will sell to the Greeks and the Serbs, and he will take—steal, if you like—whatever of value he can get from all three of them.

"I tell you all this because I don't want to fly false colors with you. I lived that life when I was a boy. But I should like to make you understand that in some way, by some esoteric, involved, well-nigh impenetrable process of psychology, it is not stealing in the sense that Toutou steals. My people have been outcasts for centuries; they have been bred up in this way of life. It is as natural for them to take what they need and thrive on other people's needs as it is for the Arabs to practise the same methods in battling the hardships of the desert. It isn't wrong in their eyes. Put it that way. And I—I can see it both ways, Jack. I can see how wrong it is, and I can see how right it seems to them."

I dropped my hand on his shoulder.

"You don't need to say all this to me," I told him. "Why, Nikka, it's—it's——"

"It's what? Hard to understand?"

"Easy to understand," I corrected. "Hard to phrase. But I know you too well to worry about you. As for the wrench, I'm beginning to feel it myself."

Nikka resumed his restless pacing.

"I don't mind anything so much as that oily Armenian down-stairs," he insisted. "He—he is dishonest. And we make him dishonest. Not that I've used him so, Jack. Most of what I earn goes to my people, who need it, poor souls, especially since the war laid its blight on all southeastern Europe. Kostabidjian is one of the agents I employ to distribute my funds. I use him because of his connection with my uncle's tribe."

"Most of us have to use dishonest helpers occasionally," I said. "I'd hate to have to guarantee every business associate of mine. But can we trust this man, Nikka? If he's all you indicate him, isn't he likely to sell us out?"

"He'd sell us out in a minute if he dared," rejoined Nikka, with a tight-lipped smile. "But he knows that if he did he would get

a knife in him. It would be only a question of time."

"Nice company you've dragged me into!" I grumbled. "Well, let's catch up on our sleep."

THE outburst had eased Nikka's nervous tension, and he soon dozed off. For a while I watched the afternoon sunlight outside the windows; then the weariness of our travels overcame me, and I, too, slept. I woke abruptly, feeling a light blazing in my eyes. My first thought was of Toutou and Hélène de Cespedes, and I dived under the pillow for my automatic and sat up.

A man was standing in the doorway of the room with a kerosene-lamp in his hand—a tall man, with the proud look of an eagle. Wisps of silver-white hair escaped from the varicolored turban that wrapped his brows, but he held himself with the erect poise of youth. He was dressed in tight breeches of brown cloth and a blue shirt and red jacket. Round his waist was twisted a heavy sash bristling with knives and pistols.

As I prodded Nikka awake, he closed the door behind him and set the lamp on a table, calmly ignoring my pistol. Nikka, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, took one look at the apparition and jumped from the bed.

"Wasso!" he cried.

The stranger raised fingers to lips and breast in a graceful salaam and replied in the Gipsy dialect, a cadenced, musical speech when used by those to whom it was a mother tongue. Nikka grasped his hand and exchanged a rapid fire of question and answer, then called to me:

"This is my uncle. He arrived sooner than he expected. Come and meet him."

Wasso Mikali rendered me a salaam and a hand-clasp. His bright eyes surveyed my face, and he made a comment which drew a laugh from Nikka.

"My uncle thinks you have the look of one who likes to know how many cartridges his enemy carries," Nikka translated.

The old Gipsy sank to his haunches on the bare floor, with a sweeping gesture of invitation to both of us to join him.

"No, no!" exclaimed Nikka, as I started for a chair. "He has never sat on a chair in his life. Do as he does, or he will think you are trying to demonstrate how different you are."

So I crouched cross-legged beside them—

it seemed to be easy enough for Nikka to resume the ways of his boyhood—and concealed my discomfort as stoically as I could. It was close to midnight when we were wakened, and the talk with Wasso Mikali lasted for several hours. First, Nikka explained to him the circumstances of our trip to Constantinople, and the old man's eyes glistened at the mention of the treasure. He interrupted with a liquid flow of polysyllables.

"HE SAYS," Nikka interpreted, when he had finished, "that he has heard about it. It is just as I told you and Hugh—the tradition is known all through the Balkans. He says that the treasure is concealed in an ancient palace in Stamboul which has been inhabited longer than men can remember by a tribe of Gipsies whose chief is one Beran Tokalji. He says that this Tokalji is a great thief"—Nikka grinned ruefully—"that comes well from my uncle, Jack—and that there is a rumor among the tribes that he, Tokalji, is an ally of a group of Frank thieves. There is a tradition in Tokalji's tribe that their forefathers believed the treasure ultimately would go to them."

"Will he help us?" I asked eagerly.

Nikka gave me an odd look.

"His tribe is mine. My wish is their wish. How can they refuse?"

"Yes," I insisted; "but how much will they want? Is it safe to tell him all this?"

Nikka's face flushed purple. For a moment I thought he would strike me. Then he turned and shot a question at the old Gipsy, who replied with an amused grin.

"I did not repeat your second question," said Nikka coldly. "He would not have taken it in good grace even from me. But I did tell him your first. Do you want to know just what his answer was?"

"Yes," I said. "And I say, Nikka; don't be uppish because I don't know the ropes about your damned family. Man dear, this is all new to me."

Nikka relented at once.

"My fault," he apologized, slightly shamefaced. "This Gipsy complex I told you about plays funny tricks with me. But"—and his grin duplicated Wasso Mikali's—"my uncle's precise answer to your first question was that he would consider 'the spittle of his sister's son ample payment for whatever he could do.' He meant it, too."

Wasso Mikali was a very wise man. He questioned Nikka closely concerning our situation, and this was his verdict:

"When you fight with thieves you must use thieves' tricks. You did right to come to me. Now, I will secure fitting garments for you, my sister's son, and for your *Amerikansky* friend, Jakka. For him also I will make a dye of walnut bark and chestnut leaves that will turn him as dark as our people, so that men will not turn and stare at him on the road.

"After that, I think we had best go away from this place as soon as possible. You have traveled rapidly and shaken off your enemies' pursuit. It is well to take every advantage of an opportunity. Moreover, we must go across the Rhodopes to the place where the tribe has hidden some horses we got from a Rumanian boyar. We will collect the horses, together with some of my young men who can handle a knife, and go on to Stamboul. All men go to Stamboul, and who will notice a Tzigane band?"

"But it was not my thought that you should abandon the affairs of the tribe and come and fight with me," remonstrated Nikka.

"Are you not the son of my sister?" rejoined the old Gipsy. "If you had not elected to go to Buda with your violin, would you not be chief of the band? Do I not stand in your place? Well then, light of my eyes, we will do for you all that we may."

And he produced a battered silver tobacco-box and rolled himself a cigarette, sitting back on his haunches with the lithe grace of a cat. Nikka flung me a proud glance as he translated the pledge.

"It's all right," I admitted, with due humility. "And I was all wrong; but I didn't know the middle ages were still with us."

Nikka laughingly repeated my remark, and his uncle's twinkling eyes conveyed his retort before it was translated:

"Say to my young friend Jakka that if a tribe cannot stand by their own, then these days are worse than the old times."

With that he left us, and Nikka and I secured another hour's sleep. When he returned he was accompanied by a younger edition of himself, who carried two bundles which were disclosed as complete suits of

Tzigane dress. He himself carried a pot of warm brown liquid, and he proceeded to apply the stain to me with a small paint-brush. Hair, mustache, face and body were darkened to a mellow brown. The stuff dried quickly, and I was soon able to pull on the strange garments, which Nikka showed me how to adjust and fasten.

I could not help laughing at my reflection in the mirror of the cheap French *bureau de toilette*. The tight trousers, the short jacket and the big turban increased my height, and the gaudy colors of turban and sash gave me a bizarre appearance that was startlingly unfamiliar. But there was none of this effect in Nikka's get-up. He looked the Gipsy, the Oriental, a kingly vagabond.

"You belong," I said. "But I feel like an imposter."

"You'll grow used to it," he answered, folding in the ends of his sash. "Did they give you a knife?" I exhibited the horn-handled, eight-inch blade, with its sheath hooked to a leather belt that circled my waist beneath the sash. "Good! Got your automatic and spare clips?"

"Yes. And how about these clothes?"

I pointed to the civilized garments we had discarded.

"Kostabidjian will send them on to Constantinople in a few days." He sighed. "Personally, Jack, I don't care if I never wear them again. I can earn hundreds of dollars an hour with my fiddle, but what's it worth compared with this? And the open road ahead! Civilization is a fraud, Jack. I was a fool ever to quit the Gipsy life."

"Well, you're back in it again," I replied, "and perhaps you'll be feeling you were a fool to return to it. I know I feel like a fool. Let's go."

IT WAS still dark when we left the house. Kostabidjian and his servant were waiting for us in the courtyard. They had saddled two horses, and a mule was loaded with bulky packs—food, blankets, tarpaulins and several cooking-utensils. The Armenian kept himself in the background. He seemed in deadly fear of Wasso Mikali, who treated him as though he were a cur to be kicked into the gutter if he interfered. And, indeed, there was something singularly imposing about the old Tzigane, who strode round with the air of one used to taking as he desired and giving as he pleased.

But just as we were leaving, the dumb servant having swung open the outer door, Kostabidjian mustered sufficient courage to press to Nikka's side.

"Everything was satisfactory?" he inquired timidly. "I have served——"

"Well enough," returned Nikka, swinging into the saddle of one of the horses; "except that you talk too much. Guard your tongue if you would keep it. Your servant there—" He shrugged significantly. Even by the starlight I could see the pallor that blanched the Armenian's face. He took the threat in sober earnest.

"You shall have no cause to blame. All shall be as you wish. I shall remit the charges for the last distribution. Take your horse, *monseigneur*, both horses—the mule. Take all!"

Nikka gave him a single look, and he subsided.

"*Heidi, Jakka!*" called Wasso Mikali.

"Mount, Jack," added Nikka. "The other horse is for you. We must hasten. My uncle does not like to be seen entering or leaving the town."

We rode out in single file—first Wasso Mikali, then Nikka, then myself, last the young Tzigane, leading the pack-mule. The Gipsies set a pace that made the horses trot to keep up with them—a long, slack-kneed shamble, ungainly in appearance but tremendously effective. By sunrise we had left the town behind the first mountain ridge and were heading north toward the waste of mountains that fringed the Bulgarian frontier.

During the early part of the day we passed frequent villages, melancholy collections of hovels that had been scorched by the awful visitation of wars the Balkans had known for two decades. But in the afternoon we departed from the main road and struck off across the hills. Occasionally we saw farmhouses or sheepfolds, but when night came we made camp in a lonely ravine with the stars for roof. There was not a light on the horizon, not even the barking of dogs to indicate a habitation.

The next day it was practically the same. The trail we followed was a mere trace that sometimes disappeared. Toward evening we entered a vast forest and finally halted on the banks of a stream where a camp-fire blazed. Against the flames showed gaunt, turbaned figures.

"Are these our friends?" I asked.

"They are Pomaks," said Nikka. He spat contemptuously.

"What——"

"Moslems! Swine!"

While Wasso Mikali and the young Tzigane, whose name was Sacha, made the fire under a boulder, Nikka and I led our tired animals down to the stream to drink. Several of the Pomaks—dirty, shifty-eyed fellows in the same gaudy raiment that the Tziganes affected—lounge up to us. One of them stepped in Nikka's path, and Nikka promptly kicked him. The man turned like a flash, his knife out, and Nikka dropped the bridle he was holding and closed with him. Two of the Pomaks jumped for me, knives wheeling.

I did what I had done in the fight in the gun-room—hit out with my fists. The first man I knocked into the water, and the second yelled for help, circling me cautiously the while. Nikka, after one click of blades, stabbed his man in the shoulder, and we stood back to back, half a dozen Pomaks pelting up from their fire.

"Wait!" said Nikka, as I drew my automatic.

There was a scurry in the shadows, and Wasso Mikali thrust his way into the group surrounding us. He said nothing, but stood there where they could see him in the firelight, and they muttered together and slunk away, the man Nikka had wounded clutching his wounded arm.

"What is your uncle—a justice of the peace?" I inquired facetiously.

"He is Wasso Mikali," answered Nikka, wiping his knife-blade on the grass. "Now I feel better, Jack. It is still the same. The Pomak curs crawl to heel when the Gipsy speaks. I wondered if it could be just as in my boyhood—after all that has happened in the world."

"If you ask me," I returned, "I don't believe anything has happened in this world of yours."

"Much has happened. But the Gipsy is always the same—and so likewise, it seems, is the Pomak. God! But it felt good to kick that pig!"

I regarded my friend with a recurrence of that amazement which he had stirred in me several times before. The quiet, self-contained musician, the artist, the efficient subaltern of the Foreign Legion, the cultured

man about town had been replaced by an arrogant forest princeling, savagely contemptuous of all but his own kind.

THE Pomaks gave us a wide berth, and early as we were afoot in the morning, they were off before us.

As we progressed that day the mountains became wilder and more barren. Once we saw a lumber-camp on the lower slope of a ridge we traversed. In the early afternoon I saw what I took to be a castle perched atop a huge crag miles away across a tumbled mass of peaks. But Nikka explained that it was one of those fortified monasteries which alone kept the fires of learning alight during the gloomy centuries when the Turk's rule ran as far as the Danube.

The path we followed was eccentric in the extreme. In fact, there was no path. We climbed a succession of gullies and ravines opening out of one another, and at dusk emerged upon a sheltered valley, buried deep between precipitous slopes draped in a virgin covering of conifers, chestnut and beech. A little rivulet foamed down the middle, dammed at the foot by a crude barrier of rocks. Horses and mules and a few sheep and goats grazed on the banks. Against the mountain wall on either side were built a number of rough log shelters, part houses, part caves. Children, naked for the most part, played about. Women were washing in the brook or tending several open fires. A dozen men were lying or sitting on the ground.

"They don't seem surprised to see us," I commented to Nikka, whose brooding eyes were drinking in the picture.

"They know we must be friends," he answered. "Else the lookouts down the path would have signaled them we were coming—and we should not have come," he added, with a flitting smile.

"Do you know this place?"

"As well as—how shall I put it?—as well as Hugh knows Castle Chesby. No; I was not born here. My mother lay on the floorboards of a caravan-cart in the Bukowina. My father was looking for likely ponies to trade with Bulgarian officers. But they brought me back here, and here I grew to boyhood. Do you see that first hovel on this bank? That was where I was taught to fiddle. And there——"

Wasso Mikali, striding in front of us, raised his voice in a great shout, and the men by the houses jumped to their feet and crowded toward us. The old Gipsy added something in which Nikka's name was repeated two or three times, and they cried out in astonishment. In the next moment they were swarming round us, and sinewy hands were clasping ours; rows of white teeth were gleaming in welcoming smiles, and Nikka was being greeted with a heart-warming mixture of affection and respect.

Once they discovered I could not talk their language they let me alone, but Nikka they plied with questions until the women summoned us to the fires for the evening meal. Their attitude toward him was extraordinary. He was one of themselves—several were his cousins; most of them were related to him in some remote degree of consanguinity. He had lived among them for years. Yet to them, as to the rest of the world, he was also the great master, the violinist who could charm multitudes, upon whose bounty, too, they and others like them had been sustained in periods of want.

While the women served us with stew and bread Nikka introduced me to them, and they promptly manifested a naive interest in my person and career. They all called me "Jakka." They were amazed to learn that I made my living by drawing plans of houses for people. Who, they inquired, with frank disbelief, needed to have somebody draw for him the plan of his house? It was absurd. You simply took logs and boards, or bricks and stone, if you were in a city, and you put them together. They even insisted upon dragging me away from the fire to the nearest house to illustrate what they meant. They were determined to convince me how superfluous was my profession.

We remained in the valley for one day, just long enough for Wasso Mikali to pick the six men he intended to take with him, select horse-flesh for ostensible trading purposes, and make the necessary arrangements for leaving the tribe so long without his guidance. It interested me that he appointed as subchief his wife, a wrinkled old beldame, who boasted a complete mouthful of yellowed teeth and rolled cigarettes with one hand. We stole from the valley by twilight, so that our exit

might not be observed by any chance spies, and we camped for the night in a grove floored with beech-mast, where the wild boars rooted.

The following day we immersed ourselves in the colorful stream of traffic on a main-traveled highway. Caravans of pack-ponies jingled along. Bands of itinerant Gipsies like ourselves, camel trains, endless processions of ox-carts, and, very rarely, an automobile or a *fiacre* moved in both directions. Monks from the mountain monasteries looked askance at Pomak and Tzigane. The Balkan races in their varied garb jangled and wrangled by. But not too close to the Greek frontier we swerved into a byway and gave the custom-houses a safe margin.

After that it was the same story for more than a week. Two hundred and fifty miles we traveled, south and east, and at last there came a day when we passed the Tchataldya barrier and from a hillock caught a glimpse of a sky-line of towers and floating domes and soaring minarets, and beyond them, to the right, a hint of blue that was the meeting-place of the Bosphorus and the Marmora.

"It looks like a fairy city!" I exclaimed.

"It will stink in your nostrils," replied Nikka curtly. "It is Stamboul—the last stand of the Turk."

UNTIL we crossed its very threshold the spell of the city held us. Not even the noisome belt of Russian refugee camps and tawdry villas and the unkempt tombs of the Hills of the Dead could shatter the illusion of that splendid sky-line. The nearer we approached the more impressive it became. The long gray line of the old Byzantine walls, the uneven lift of the roofs staggering up and down its seven hills, the swelling domes of mosque and basilica, the slender beauty of countless minarets, the faultless contour of cypress groves and the far blue gleam of the Golden Horn and the Marmora, with the dim background of the Asiatic hills, all combined to mold a picture of piercing loveliness.

But when we passed through the echoing arch of the Adrianople Gate the spell was broken. Crazy houses toppled over the filth of the streets; a dense mass of unwashed humans eddied to and fro; squalor begging description leered from the steep lanes and

alleys that branched off from the main streets. A hundred races swarmed about us, vying with one another in wretchedness and misery. Dogs and flies fought in the gutters with children and old people. Beggars whined for bakshish. Food-vendors yelled their cries and hawked their unsanitary wares. Every kind of clothing appeared, from greasy European dress to the quaint peasant costumes of south-eastern Europe and Anatolia and all the countries eastward to the Hindu Kush.

It was like one's fancies of the "Thousand and One Nights," and yet unlike them. For here was no lavishness of Oriental display, no exotic magnificence—only suffering and want and hunger and disease and smells and a dreadful ugliness that was spiritual as well as physical. And back and forth in that swarm of humanity's dregs wandered men of the civilization which had prospered outside the pale of Islam—French and British officers, bluejackets, *poilus*, tommies and an occasional tourist clinging to a smirking guide.

Nikka, riding beside me, viewed the spectacle with cynical detachment.

"Seven hundred years ago," he said, "this was incomparably the stateliest, most powerful city in Christendom. It was the center of an empire that was still able to stand alone. It enshrined all that was best and most worthy of the ancient Greek and Roman culture. It had a million inhabitants. It had public services, schools, posts, police, drains, water-supply. Life was safe, commercial independence and prosperity assured—which was more than could be said for any other community, East or West."

"And the Turks made it what it is!" I exclaimed, as Wasso Mikali, leading our little procession, turned off the main street we had been following into one of the foul-smelling, littered lanes that twisted down into shadowy regions of corruption.

"Not the Turks—the Turks only finished what others had begun. No; the beginning of what you see round you was made by Hugh's ancestor and his brother knights of the Fourth Crusade, who, instead of fulfilling their vows to journey to the Holy Land, voyaged to Constantinople and overpowered the feeble emperor of that day and then sacked and wrecked the city. It was never the same afterward. It never

recovered its strength. And when the Crusades finally impelled the concentration of the Moslem power, it became only a question of time before the city must fall. Had it not been for those walls we just passed, it would have fallen a century before it did. In fact, it fell then mainly because there were not enough men to hold the defenses."

"What you say is interesting," I said. "For, after all, we are coming to-day, on Hugh's behalf, for pretty much the same object as lured his ancestor. We are hunting the treasure of the city."

"But we shall do no harm to any one by taking the treasure," returned Nikka. "What use would it be to these people round us? Would they share in it? Never! It would be employed for the pleasures of their masters. There is only one way to redeem Constantinople."

"What?"

"Repopulate it."

We plunged deeper and deeper into the dark byways, sometimes traversing streets so narrow that pedestrians were compelled to squeeze themselves flat against the house walls to permit us to pass. In the twilight it was difficult to see far ahead, and at every corner Wasso Mikali raised his voice in a shout of warning. But at last we rode forth into a wider thoroughfare and stopped opposite the gate of a huge, fortress-like building, whose windowless stone walls towered above the surrounding housetops.

"The khan of the Georgians," explained Nikka. "Here we shall be swallowed up in an army of travelers. No one would think of looking for us in such a place."

WASSO MIKALI made the necessary payment to the porter at the gate, and we rode between the ponderous steel-bound doors into a courtyard such as you find in a barracks. Round it rose three tiers of galleries, arched in stone, and below them were a succession of stables fronted by sheds and penthouses. Piles of goods lay everywhere—in the courtyard and on the galleries. Horses, mules, oxen and camels neighed, brayed, bellowed and grunted. Men talked in knots on the mucky cobbles of the court, squatted in every gallery or leaned over the railings, shouting to each other. Women sat on bales and nursed their infants. Children ran about with

the usual ability of children to escape sudden death in dangerous places. It sounded like a boiler factory and an insane asylum holding a jubilee convention.

But Wasso Mikali and his young men pushed through the confusion with a bored air. They appropriated a corner of a stable and put up the horses, uncinched the packs and climbed a flight of stone stairs to the second floor, where the old Gipsy rented two cubicles—each lighted by a grated window two feet square and containing nothing except some foul straw—from a custodian who looked like the conception of Noah entertained by the artists of the subscription editions of the Holy Bible.

Nikka had relapsed so thoroughly to Gipsyism that he professed not to be suspicious of the straw, but at my insistence he procured a worn broom from Father Noah and we swept out the room which had been set aside for Wasso Mikali and ourselves. The six retainers in Wasso's train were given the next cubicle, and they promptly piled into it the straw which we had banished from our room, so I doubt whether our labors produced any benefit, as they spent as much time with us as in their own quarters.

Such food as we did not have with us we bought from a general store conducted in an angle of the courtyard, and the cooking was done over a brazier, which, with the necessary charcoal, we rented from Father Noah. When night fell and the cooking-fires blazed out all over the courtyard and in the galleries, it was a sight worth coming to Constantinople to see. There was an acrid reek of dung in the air, the sweaty smell of human bodies, the pungent aroma of the charcoal and an endless babble of voices in a score of tongues and dialects.

Afterward some men on our gallery played on bagpipes. From the courtyard came the twanging of simple stringed instruments, and nasal voices lifted in interminable melancholy songs. A woman danced in the light of two flaring kerosene-torches by the gate until she won the attention of a bandy-legged Turcoman rug merchant. A thief attempted to pick the purse of a fat Persian. A Kurdish horse-dealer tried to knife a snarling Greek. And gradually the khan's inmates sought their sleep. Most of them lay in the courtyard or stables, beside their animals and goods, or

else on the galleries. The snores of a score resounded into our cubicle. Yet I slept, waking at intervals of the night when a child cried for the breast or a camel broke loose and thrashed round the courtyard, or a party of belated travelers stumbled over the sleepers outside our door.

We were astir early in the morning, and before eight o'clock Wasso Mikali, Nikka and I left the khan—Wasso having given strict injunctions to his young men to stick to their quarters and discourage any endeavors to make them talk—to cross the Golden Horn to the European quarter of Pera. This walk was no less fascinating than our ride from the Adrianople Gate. It took us through the northeastern half of Stamboul and, after we had passed the lower bridge of boats, into the comparatively civilized conditions of the Galata and Pera areas.

BUT, to tell the truth, once we had left Stamboul Nikka and I thought little of our surroundings and much of Hugh. Nikka even relinquished some of the wolfish manner which his return to the Gipsy life had inspired, and we discussed eagerly, and not for the first time, the possibility that harm had come to Hugh. But our fears were relieved when we came to the corner of the street opposite the hotel, for there by the entrance stood Hugh and Watkins, chatting with my cousin, Vernon King.

Nikka led the three of us up to the hotel, shambling ungracefully and goggling at the Western aspect of the building and the people who passed on the sidewalk.

"Anybody covering them?" he whispered.

I looked round. On the farther curb-stone, smoking and pretending to be interested in the passers-by, lounged a brace of Tziganes no less sinister in appearance than ourselves. I indicated them to Nikka as I offered him tobacco from the box I carried, Balkan-fashion, in my waist-sash.

"All right," he said. "We must be careful. We'll move up beside Hugh, and when there's nobody in ear-shot you say what you have to say, speaking to me."

We peered open-mouthed into the lobby, gaped at shop windows and slowly worked to a position close by Hugh and Vernon King. I was amused to observe that Watkins confined his attention to the two spies



I dived under the pillow for my automatic and sat up. A man was standing in the doorway with a kerosene-lamp in his hand.

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across the street, whom he favored with a steady, malignant gaze. King, too, was immersed in the conversation. Hugh gave us one keen glance, obviously because we were Gipsies. But he did not recognize us in our gaudy clothes, dirty and unshaven.

"If they don't come in the next few—" King was saying, as we halted close by, staring at a Levantine lady in a Parisian frock who was entering a taxi.

"Better not," warned Hugh, with a wink toward us.

"This is one time we fooled you," I remarked, speaking in a low tone of voice at Nikka—there was nobody else within twenty feet of our group at the moment. "Jack speaking, Hugh. You and Watty follow us. Go round the block the other way from us. We'll pick you up."

Nikka had a bright thought as we started off. The *commissionaire* at the hotel entrance had been watching us with suspicion, and Nikka made a pretense of thrusting by him into the lobby. The *commissionaire* grabbed him by the arm and hustled him to the sidewalk, and at this we all pretended uneasiness and hurried up the street. Hugh and Watkins watched us disappear, then said good-by to King and walked down the street. They were rounding the corner of the farther side of the block as we entered it, and when we made sure they had seen us we turned into a cross-street that led between buildings toward Galata and the Golden Horn.

HUGH'S shadows had a poor time of it after that, and I believe we lost them in the maze of crooked lanes in Stamboul. At any rate, they were nowhere in sight when we dodged into the gateway of the khan of the Georgians. Hugh was bursting to talk, but Nikka motioned to him to be silent. The appearance of two Europeans like himself and Watkins was bound to attract some attention, and we rushed them through the courtyard as rapidly as possible. Of course, everybody who noticed them at all concluded that they were up to no good, considering the disreputable company they were in.

So they panted after us up the steep stairs to the second gallery, and Wasso Mikali opened the door of our cubicle and stood aside until Watkins had entered. Then he came in himself and locked it and

squatted down with his back against it. He was as imperturbable as Watkins, which is saying a great deal. Watkins surveyed the room with cool disfavor, drew his finger through a smudge of smoke on the wall and shook his head.

"Dear, dear, gentlemen!" he said. "They don't do very well for you 'ere—do they, now? A proper queer place, I call it. And you 'ave changed, too, if I may say so. Mr. Jack, sir, you must let me draw you a 'ot tub, and I'll give Mr. Nikka a shave."

We shouted with laughter.

"That is supposed to be a disguise, Watty," exploded Hugh. "My word, it's a good one! You lads had me fooled completely. I looked at you just as I've looked at scores of rascals like you, and King and I went on wondering what had become of you. I say; who's the old gent?"

Nikka introduced his uncle, and Wasso Mikali met Hugh with the unstudied courtesy that made it so difficult to remember that he knew nothing of what we call "manners" or the gentler aspects of life.

"I wish you'd tell him how much I appreciate his assistance," said Hugh. "And I shall be very glad to——"

"Hold on, Hugh!" I interrupted. "Remember, he's Nikka's uncle. And, besides, he's a king in a small way on his own."

Hugh turned squarely to Nikka.

"My mistake, old man," he said. "I apologize for what I didn't say. But will you please give him my thanks all the same?"

Wasso Mikali's bright eyes—eyes that sparked with vitality—took on a humorous gleam.

"He says," Nikka translated, chuckling, "that he appreciates your thanks, but he never does anything for thanks. He is here because I am interested and there is a chance of fighting, and he never loses an opportunity to draw his knife if there is loot to be won or a friend to be aided."

"He's a sportsman," approved Hugh.

"And there are six more like him in the next room," I added.

"I say, Nikka; you brought a feudal levy—what?" Hugh exclaimed delightedly. "Well, we shall need them. This is going to be a tight job if you ask me."

"Is Toutou here?"

"I think not. So far as we have observed, none of the head-liners has

appeared on the scene, but the underlings are very efficient. Vernon King and I have been over the ground rather thoroughly. He's been a priceless help, Jack. Don't know what Watty and I would have done without him. He saved us from having to rely on a guide to learn the city. And Betty—she's the most enthusiastic worker on our side."

"She would be," I agreed. "But you don't mean to say that you and she have really done any work?"

"Oh, come now!" he expostulated. "What do you take me for? We have worked a lot. Betty has a motor-launch her father chartered so they could run up and down the coast on his archeological trips, and we used that to mark down the house where we think the treasure is located."

NIKKA and I both forgot our Gipsy stoicism and hitched forward. We were sitting on the floor; Hugh and Watkins, in recognition of their clean clothes, were perched on two packs.

"Have you really got a line on the site of the Bucoleon?" asked Nikka.

"Yes," said Hugh. "Matter of fact, that was comparatively easy, thanks to Vernon King. You see, he knows his Constantinople of old; and after consulting with some other learned johnnies out at Robert College and several ancient Greeks of the Syllagos—the Historical Society, you know—he was able to point out quite accurately the general site of the great palace. When we had gone so far, it became a case of finding the building within that area that held our prize.

"In that we were helped by knowing that it was occupied by a band of Gipsies who had lived there a long time. The Phanariots—Greeks of the Syllagos, I mean—picked out the building like a shot. To verify it, we watched it from the street and also from the motor-launch. There isn't any doubt about it. It's in what they call Sokaki Masyeri—a mean little street in a mean quarter that skirts the old sea-walls beyond the railway tracks. This house is built right on the walls. It has a kind of battered magnificence, elaborately carved cornices and window-moldings, and it rambles over a good bit of ground, including a fairish-sized courtyard, just as you would expect of the wreck of an old palace. To be

sure, it's no more than a small portion of what was the Palace of the Bucoleon. As Vernon King pointed out, the man who started out to excavate the whole site of the palace would have to embark in the real-estate business on a large scale and work with steam-dredges."

"And you're positive about all this?" I insisted.

"Oh, Lord, yes! There can't be any mistake, Jack. Why, the bird who lives in this house is the king of the Stamboul Gipsies, the chief bad man of Constantinople. He has a whole tribe of cut-throats at his beck and call. Ask anybody here about Beran Tokalji——"

Wasso Mikali leaped to his feet at sound of that name and strode over to us, his hand on his knife.

"What's the row?" inquired Hugh, as the old Gipsy and Nikka engaged in a brisk exchange of sibilant phrases.

"Our friend has this person Tokalji's number," I explained. "He told us about him. He had heard about the treasure and the house."

"Then we must be right!" cried Hugh.

"You're right enough," agreed Nikka, while Wasso Mikali returned to his place by the door and rolled a cigarette. "It seems, also, that this Tokalji is a particular enemy of my uncle. He was suggesting a little exterminating expedition."

"That's the last move to try," answered Hugh quickly. "We've got to be very careful, lads. The authorities were rather puzzled to account for my continued interest in the city at first. As it is—" He turned brick-red to his hair.

"As it is," I grinned, "your pursuit of Bet has material advantages."

"Curse you, Jack!" he retorted disagreeably. "That's not the way to put it. And, anyhow, I'm not responsible for what damn-fool officials think."

"You are in luck," said Nikka, with a smile.

Hugh stood up, hot and exasperated.

"I didn't come here to be spoofed by a couple of idiotic rotters!" he snapped. "When you find your senses, send for me."

"Oh, hang on to your temper, Hugh," I said, dropping my hand on his shoulder. "Get back to where we were. You said we must play safe. We've got six of Nikka's cousins in the next room, first-class

knife-handlers, every one of them. With Wasso Mikali and us, that makes eleven."

"And Vernon King is twelve," added Hugh. "He wants to be in on the whole business. It appeals to his archeological bump as well as to his sporting tastes. But we can't have a roughhouse yet. We don't know the ground well enough. We've got to determine where the treasure is."

"Did you get the copy of the instructions from Miss King?" asked Nikka.

"Yes. And had her immediately post it to herself, *Poste Restante*, as we agreed. It's there now. I don't need it. I found I had memorized it perfectly. No; the next step is to get inside that house, by stealth if possible, by force if every other means fails."

"We ought to try to get inside Tokalji's house as soon as possible if Toutou and Hélène and the rest of them are not here yet," said Nikka slowly. "Are you sure about that, Hugh?"

"We haven't seen a sign of them."

"They will have been scurrying about our back trail," I suggested. "Our disappearance must have upset their plans."

"Probably," assented Nikka. "Yes; if we are going to profit by that trick, we must move soon. I don't believe either Jack or I could fool that Cespedes woman. At the same time, what Hugh says about the danger of violent tactics is very true. We should keep my uncle and his men as a reserve. If it ever comes to a cold showdown, we are going to need more than ourselves."

"Professor King and I have talked it over frequently," said Hugh. "But we haven't been able to think of a safe way of getting inside. Of course we could run ashore in the launch some night and climb up the courtyard wall that fronts on the Bosphorus, but we'd certainly be discovered."

"It wouldn't work," asserted Nikka. "No; to get in and have opportunity to look round for the landmarks mentioned in the instructions, we must be accepted as friends."

"It can't be done," protested Hugh.

"Oh, yes, it can! Jack and I can do it—with Watkins to help us."

Watkins started up from the pack upon which he had been endeavoring to appear comfortable.

"Oh, now, Mr. Nikka! I never 'eard the like! Your ludship, I protest—I do! I wasn't cut out for a Gipsy. Can you see me in such clothes? It's not decent, your ludship, for a man of my years to be going in public dressed like a pantomime."

"We're not going to make a Gipsy out of you, Watty," returned Nikka, waving him to silence. "You are going to be the innocent victim of two outrageous bandits."

"That's worse!" groaned Watkins. "I'll do my duty, your ludship, and take what comes, but there's no call for all this wild talk, if I may say so, sir—and what does it all lead to? And I'm mortal sure, your ludship, there's bugs in this room. 'Adn't we better be getting back to the 'otel, sir?"

"Sit down!" commanded Hugh. "Nobody's stuck you up yet. What's your plan, Nikka?"

"JUST this: When we leave here, you and Watkins head for Tokalji's house. We'll follow you at a distance. You and Watty must prowl through the street as mysteriously as you can, looking up at the house, examining its approaches—all that sort of thing. Make sure the street is empty——"

"Oh, it's always empty," interrupted Hugh. "It's crescent-shaped, with comparatively few houses opening on it."

"That helps. Now, when you get into the street, look back and you will see us lurking after you. Pretend to be scared. Then we'll go after you, knives out. Run. You get away, Hugh, but we catch Watty and throw him down——"

"Yes; it 'ad to be me, gentlemen," sighed Watkins.

"Empty out his pockets, start to cut his throat—you'd better not be wriggling about that time, Watty, or the knife might slip—and you raise a yell for the police round the corner. We change our minds, kick Watty on his way and run back. At the gate of Tokalji's house we ask for admission, claiming we fear pursuit. I think—I am quite sure—they will let us in. It is a chance we must take. They will have seen what we did, and from what you and Wasso Mikali tell me, Tokalji considers himself the chief of the local criminals. He will demand a percentage of our loot and let it go at that."

"It sounds simple," I said. "But what about me?"

"You are a Frenchman, an *ex-apache* and deserter from the Salonica troops. Let me do the talking. I know Gipsies. If you tell them a bold tale and carry a high bluff, they will take you at your own valuation."

"It's a plan worth trying," agreed Hugh. "But you can't expect to stay with Tokalji forever."

"I know that. We'll do the best we can."

"Start now?"

"Wait until afternoon. That will drive your shadows insane, and they will be doubling back to the hotel on the chance of picking you up again."

We spent the balance of the time together, hashing over our experiences and horrifying Watkins by revealing to him the state of our apparel. Incidentally, we arranged to have complete changes of European clothes sent to us at the khan, so that, if it became necessary, we could shift rôles inside the projecting walls of the great caravansary.

WHEN the hour came to leave, Wasso Mikali and his young men escorted Hugh and Watkins through the courtyard, and Nikka and I followed at some distance. The Gipsies stopped in the gateway, and we strolled on alone after our friends in the direction of the Bosphorus. We had walked for upward of an hour along the narrow lanes, up-hill and down-hill, elbowing a passage through the sordid stream of life, and had crossed the line of the Orient Railway when from an elevation we glimpsed the sheen of water, and Hugh, a hundred feet in front of us, tossed his head as if invitation to press on.

We accepted the hint, and as they rounded an alley corner into a dingy lane that was overtopped midway by a wall of massive Roman construction, we were close at their heels. Now the comedy began. Hugh played up in great shape. He drew a paper from his pocket and affected to stare along the wall. He counted his steps. He looked round him fearfully. He conferred with Watkins, who manifested even more uneasiness. It was Watty who looked behind him and spied us peeping round some stonework. It was Watty, too, I am bound to say, who undertook to measure the height of the wall by contrast with his own stature—at least, he appeared to be doing so. Afterward he denied that he had had any thought of this. He was only

trying to get as far away as possible from us. We "fair gave 'im the creeps."

We slunk into the alley in as hangdog a manner as we could manage. Watty called Hugh's attention to us, as we thought, with genuine dramatic art. We heard later that he remarked: "It ain't right, your ludship, these carryings-on! I don't 'old for my own skin, but there's Mr. Jack, Mr. Nikka, little knowing what they'll be getting theirselves into." To which Hugh says he replied: "Steady on, old boot-trees! England expects every man to take his beating."

Anyhow, as Nikka whipped out his knife and ran for them, Watty squeaked and lit off with a considerable lead on Hugh. But Hugh wasted no breath. He sprinted and lunged into Watkins, knocking him against a house wall, so that we had time to catch up. And as Hugh reached the curve of the crescent-shaped street, Nikka overhauled Watkins and toppled him over with every appearance of ruthless brutality. In the next moment I added my knife to the picture, and while I menaced the poor old chap's throat, Nikka scientifically emptied his pockets and ripped a money-belt from under his clothes.

"Oh, Mr. Nikka, sir!" moaned Watkins. "Not that, sir! There wasn't anything said about my belt, sir. Do be careful with that knife, Mr. Jack! It's my throat, sir, if I may say so; not the belt, Mr. Nikka! Oh dear, sir, whatever will I do about my trousers. Torn me apart, you 'ave. Owl!" This last as Nikka gave every indication of intending to cut his heart out.

There came a yell from Hugh round the corner, and Nikka bounded to his feet. Between us we hoisted Watkins to his and propelled him from us with a couple of really brutal kicks. Collar torn, jacket scruffed and trousers unbraced, Watkins scudded for that corner like a swallow on the wing. But we did not wait to watch his exit. We took to our own heels and headed in the opposite direction, hesitated at the far corner and doubled back to the closed door that was buried in the high wall of Tokalji's house.

Nikka banged the thick wood with his knife-hilt.

"Who knocks?" rumbled a voice.

"Two who fear the police."

A small wicket opened.

"We want none such here." And to one within, "Be still!"

"There is something to be divided," answered Nikka.

"Where do you come from?"

"Salonica—and elsewhere."

"Tziganes both?" And again to one unseen, "I said, 'Be still,' little devil!"

"My comrade is a Frank—but he is one of us."

A hinge creaked.

"Enter," growled the voice, "quickly."

THE crack was wide enough for one at a time, and we slid through like shadows, the open leaf slamming behind us. We stood in a large courtyard. To right and left were solid, time-worn buildings, two stories high. In front was a broken wall, partially built over by a structure of moldy brick, but there was a gap sufficiently large to reveal the Bosphorus. The court was cluttered with bales of goods and boxes and a number of men and women in Gipsy dress.

But we did not spare any protracted attention for them. There were two far more interesting characters close at hand. One was a stalwart, black-bearded man, with a seamed, wicked face, who wore an habitual scowl. The other was a girl of perhaps eighteen, whose lissome figure set off her ragged dress like a Parisian *toilette*. She was very brown. Her hair was a tumbled heap of midnight, and her eyes were great, glowing depths of passion. Her shapely legs were bare almost to the knee, and her flimsy bodice hardly covered her. But she carried herself with the unconsciously regal air that I had noted in Wasso Mikali.

She regarded me almost with contempt, but her eyes fairly devoured Nikka.

"This is the one!" she cried. "He ran like that stallion we had from the Arab of Nejd, and you should have seen him strip the old Frank. He would have had the other one, too, if his friend had been as swift. Hey, foster-father, he has the makings of a great thief!" (Nikka afterward translated the conversation for me.)

But the man only glowered at us, his hand on the hilt of one of the long knives in his waist-sash.

"Be still, girl! You jabber like a crow."

"And you snarl like a wolf, old one!" she retorted. "I say I saw them."

"Somewhat of it I saw myself," he admitted; "but is that a reason for taking strangers in from the street? Who knows them?"

"Nobody," answered Nikka promptly. "Only our knives can speak for us."

"Hey! Many a man has a knife that talks." The fellow's grin was fiendish. "A talking knife! It says three words." He flashed his own in the air. "'Haugh!' It whistles down in a deadly thrust. 'Sssssrrr-kk!' And it goes home. 'Drip-drip!' And the tale is told. That is all a knife can say."

And he sheathed his own, still grinning.

"That is why a sure knife is valuable," returned Nikka. "A pistol, now—that shouts aloud. But a knife only whispers, and if a knife knows but three words, how many of its masters can have that said of them?"

"You talk more than most, it seems," leered the bearded man. He was quick of wit.

"I have said what I have said," stated Nikka, folding his arms. "My comrade and I are new to Stamboul. We had heard of Beran Tokalji in many camps. In the winter we were in Paris, the great city of the Franks, and there, too, men spoke of Tokalji. A great thief, they said, and one who treated his people well."

"How do you know that I am Tokalji?" demanded the bearded man, plainly flattered by Nikka's speech.

Of course Nikka did not know him, but he was quick to seize the opportunity.

"I have often heard you described round the fires. It was enough to see the way you handle a knife. 'As sure as the knife of Tokalji' is the saying all along the road from Salonica to Buda, and beyond into the Frank countries."

"If you knew me and sought my help, was it wise to rob in front of my door?" countered Tokalji, but the scowl on his face was supplanted by a smirk.

Nikka affected embarrassment.

"Why, as to that, *Voivode*, there is something to be said," he agreed. "But we saw the Franks, and their looks spelled gold, and—what would you? 'Twas a chance. Also, we thought the police would not dare to touch us here."

"That may be true," Tokalji agreed in his turn. "But there are Frank soldiers

in Pera, and how if they came here to seize you?"

"But the Franks did not see us enter."

The girl thrust herself scornfully to the fore.

"Gabble, gabble, gabble!" she mocked.

"Are we old wives that we mouth over everything? These men robbed; they fled unseen; they have their loot. Foster-father, you are not so keen as you once were. Something was said of a division."

A greedy light dawned in Tokalji's eyes.

"Yes, yes!" he insisted. "That is right. So you said, my lad, and if you would have shelter, you must pay for it."

"So will I."

NIKKA flung the money-belt, some loose change and a watch down on the ground and squatted beside them. The rest of us did the same. The girl seized the belt and emptied the compartments.

"English gold!" she exclaimed. "This was worth taking. You are a man of judgment, friend. What is your name?"

"I am called Giorgi Bordu. My friend is named Jakka in the Tzigane camps. The name he bore in his own country is buried under a killing."

She looked at me more respectfully.

"Oh ho! So he has killed, has he?"

"Yes, maiden. He is not a Gipsy; so with the knife"—Nikka shrugged his shoulders in deprecation—"but with his hands and the pistol now! You should see him when there is quick work to be done."

She began shifting the money into three equal piles.

"Did he have any papers, that Frank?" asked Tokalji abruptly.

"All that he had is there," replied Nikka.

"Humph." The Gipsy thought for a moment. "It was strange that you attacked those two, Giorgi Bordu. I do not want them sneaking round here. They are after something that I want myself."

Nikka, sitting back on his heels, produced his tobacco-box and rolled a cigarette.

"Perhaps a strange thief and his friend might be of aid to you," he suggested.

"Perhaps they might—I don't know. You are smart fellows—I can see that. And I need men like you. But I am not alone in this. There are others. I must consult them. Still, you should be better than the two I am using just now."

"Are they Tziganes?" inquired Nikka.

"Of a sort. But they have lived too long with the Franks. They are not so ready as they once were, and I find they do not bring me the information I require. I make no promises, but suppose I——"

The girl screamed, and I twisted on my haunches to see that Nikka had seized her wrist.

"Let me go, pig!" she hissed, and reached for her knife with her free hand; but Nikka caught that, too.

Tokalji stared at them both unpleasantly.

"What is this?" he barked.

"I am protecting your purse and mine from this little thief," answered Nikka calmly. "While we talked, she stole."

"He lies!" spat the girl. "There is the money."

She stretched a slim brown foot toward the three little piles on the sunken flagstones. Tokalji drew his knife.

"If you take liberties with me I will carve you," he warned savagely.

Nikka's reply was to rake open the girl's bodice with his hooked fingers. A stream of coins tinkled on the pavement. He released her, and she leaped back out of his reach, staring down at him with a puzzled look in her eyes.

Tokalji burst out laughing and re-sheathed his knife.

"She is a rare one. You are the first to catch her so."

"And he will be the last!" she said in a low, tense voice, and ripped a dagger from her waist.

"Now we shall see if you can fight or only boast!" she rasped, crouching forward.

Nikka shook his head.

"I don't fight with women," he said.

"You'd better fight with her," said Tokalji philosophically, "or she will kill you. She has a swifter blade than any man of my tribe."

Nikka sank back on his haunches.

"I will not draw my knife," he said.

"Then you will die!" she hissed, and charged.

I rose and made to intervene, but Tokalji drew his knife again and came between us.

"Let her have her chance, man," he ordered in his snarling voice, and before I could pass him she struck.

But her knife was stayed in mid-air. Nikka's arm darted out; his fingers clutched

her wrist; there was a wrench—and the knife clattered beside the stolen coins. He forced her down by his side, picked up the knife and handed it to her. Then he turned his back and resumed his conversation with Tokalji.

"You were speaking of information you required," he said.

Tokalji eyed him in amazement.

"Do you wear the death-shirt that you care so little for death?" he asked.

"Death comes when it is ready," returned Nikka impassively. "Is a man to fear a maiden?"

"Many men fear that maiden," retorted Tokalji grimly. "Hey! You are a fighter. We will accept your comrade for whatever he is. You, I know I can use. Kara!" The girl looked at him sullenly. "Take the strangers to Mother Kathene. Tell her to bed them with the young men."

She stood up.

"I am not afraid of you, Giorgi Bordu," she said, humbly fearless. "You turned aside my knife with your bare hand, and my life is yours. Will you take it?"

As she spoke she pulled aside what scanty rags remained of her bodice and exposed her breast for his knife. Nikka regarded her curiously, and a light I had never seen before there gleamed in his eyes.

"Your life is your own, maiden," he answered. "But remember—I steal from others. Others do not steal from me."

"That is as it should be," she said. "You are a *voivode*, a chief. I knew you were no ordinary man when I saw you hunt down the old Frank in the street. I said to myself: 'That man is a great thief. He must be the king of a tribe.' To-night," she added royally, "I will pay ransom for my life. I will dance for you."

Tokalji emitted a peculiar gurgling sound which was intended for laughter.

"Hey, Giorgi Bordu, have you by chance been a bear-tamer?" he asked, as he swept up his pile of gold and turned away.

NIKKA and I pouched our shares of the loot we had brought in, Nikka appropriating to himself Watkin's Birmingham silver watch. The Gipsy girl never took her eyes off him as she absently refastened her tattered bodice.

"We are ready," said Nikka.

Her face flowered in a smile.

"It is well, Giorgi Bordu. Come with me."

She led us across the courtyard to the building which fronted it on the left. A man was leaning over in the doorway, strapping up a bundle, and Kara planted her bare boot in the middle of his back, sending him sprawling. He was up in a flash, with his knife out and his face distorted with anger; but when he saw who had kicked him the anger turned to smiles. He swung the bundle on his shoulder and swaggered off. And Kara looked at Nikka with the manner of a child who has performed a trick and expects to be applauded for it.

I grinned. I couldn't help it. But Nikka only motioned impatiently to the doorway. She caught her lip in a pout, dug her toes in the dust and affected not to understand him; but Nikka took one stride, with arm extended, and she danced away, all smiles again. Apparently she didn't mind as long as she made him look at her.

Inside the door was a big, stone-paved hall. There were traces of carvings on the capitals of the pillars and a spaciousness that spoke of ancient glories. The stairs that led to the upper story were railed with marble and grooved deep by the tread of countless feet. But the place reeked with the squalor of a tenement. Three old women were huddled in front of a fire that blazed on an enormous hearth, and strings of onions and garlic hung from hooks in the ceiling. All round were scattered dirty piles of blankets and personal belongings.

Kara skipped across to the fireplace and tapped the oldest of the three women on the shoulder.

"Hi, Mother Kathene!" she called loudly. "Here are two strangers Beran has taken into the tribe."

The three hags tottered to their feet and peered at us with bleared eyes.

"Strangers?" whined Mother Kathene. "Why strangers in the tribe? Haven't we enough fine young men to stab and steal for the chief? I don't like strangers."

"Strangers are bad luck," pronounced a second beldame, whose name was Zitzi.

"Bad luck!" echoed the third, who was called Lilli. "And I suppose we'll have to cook and scrub for the rascals, too."

Kara pinched her with a viciousness that made the poor old thing squeal.

"Don't talk of scrubbing to me!" she

sneered. "You wouldn't touch water to a foul pot, let alone a man's clothes. You'd drown if you were rained on. Bah, Mother Lilli, you are lucky to have a chief like Beran, who gives the old ones work to do and a shelter and food for the end of their days, instead of driving them out to seek the bounty of the Rumis and Franks. And you are luckier still to have a great thief like Giorgi Bordu to cook for. He is the greatest thief in the world. Why, he even caught me when I would have stolen from him!"

"If he steals well, he won't be a fighter," mumbled Mother Kathene. "What about the other one?"

"He took my knife from me without drawing his own!" flared Kara. "The other? Oh, he is a Frank."

"More bad luck!" wailed old Zitzi. "Tzigane folk who live with Franks are always spoiled."

Kara clouted her on the head.

"Have done with it!" she commanded imperiously. "Where are Giorgi and Jakka to lie?"

"Where they choose," returned Zitzi sourly.

Kara waved her hand about the chamber.

"Here or above, whichever you say," she announced to us. "These are the quarters of the young men."

"May we look above?" asked Nikka, anxious to seize this opportunity to explore.

Her answer was to dance up the stairs—she seldom walked or did anything slowly.

We followed her. There was a central corridor, and from it opened various rooms, some of them crammed with all manner of goods.

"Beran stores plunder here, as you can see," she said. "The other rooms are empty. The young men prefer to sleep all together, where they can watch one another."

Nikka realized that if we set up a different standard of conduct from that observed by our brother bachelors we would prejudice our position in this community.

"What is good enough for them is good enough for us," he decided. "But where do you live, maiden?"

Her face glowed rosily with satisfaction at this first evidence of his interest in herself.

"Across the court," she answered. "Come, and you shall see."

We descended the stairs into the big hall on the ground floor, where the three hags

had crouched again before the fire, and crossed the courtyard to the building opposite on the right of the entrance. It was long and graceful in appearance, beautifully built of a hard white marble, which had been coated with dirt for centuries. The cornices were elaborately sculptured in a conventional design; the window-openings were carved and set with a skill that disguised their bulk.

The door was supported by simple pillars of wonderful green stone that contrived to show its color through the accumulation of filth which tried to mask it. How such pillars could have escaped the antiquary I do not know. They were as handsome as anything in St. Sophia. But then, as we were to discover, the whole abode of Beran Tokalji constituted an amazing shrine of Byzantine art, perhaps the most remarkable non-ecclesiastical remnant in the city.

BUT of all this I thought little at the time. What interested me more than anything was that immediately above the door on a panel let into the wall was carved a representation of a bull, head lowered and in act to charge. I looked at Nikka, and his eyes met mine with a warning glance to say nothing.

Kara never gave the sculpture a glance; it meant nothing to her. She beckoned us inside the door. Here again was a spacious, pillared hall, triple-aisled, like a small church, its battered pavement showing traces here and there of the gorgeous mosaics which once had floored it. Whatever decorations adorned its walls were obscured by the incrustations of centuries of misuse. The pillars were of different stones, many of them semiprecious, and occasionally glinting pink or red or green or yellow through their drab coats of dirt and soot. At one end was an apselike space, large enough to hold a dinner-table or a throne, and on the curving wall I fancied I could discern faint traces of one of those mosaic portraits with which the Byzantine artists loved to adorn their buildings.

But this superb chamber was littered with the odds and ends of a people accustomed to dwell in tents. I suppose Tokalji's tribe, by all accounts we had, had been living here for some hundreds of years, yet they never adapted themselves to urban conditions. Generation after generation looked upon

this wonderful fragment of one of the world's stateliest palaces as no more than the four walls and a roof required to keep out rain and cold. The windows were covered by wooden shutters.

"These are the quarters of the married people," explained Kara. "Beran sleeps here." She pointed to a pallet in the recess that I likened to an apse. "The others up-stairs."

"And you?" asked Nikka.

"Oh, I live where I choose, but most of all I like my garden."

"Your garden? Where is there a garden?"

"I will show you, Giorgi Bordu."

At the end of the hall opposite the apse there was a worn stone stair. The shallow steps descended straight to an opening barred by a rude pine door. As we passed it I noted holes in the stone lintels where formerly had been cemented the bolts of heavy metal hinges—a gate, perhaps. Beyond the door was a pleasant room in which several women sewed, children scrabbled in the dirt on the floor. The sunlight poured in from windows facing us. I saw trees tossing, heard the splash of water.

KARA crossed the room, with a nod to the women, and opened another door. This led to a pillared portico, and I gasped in wonder at the sheer loveliness of this morsel of imperial Byzantium, buried in the frowsy lanes of Stamboul. There was a tangled stretch of garden, weed-grown, of course, and two jade-green cedars that lifted their heads in isolated majesty. Round the four sides ran the portico, although in two places the pillars had collapsed and the wreckage of the roof strewed the ground. But the gem of the place was the fountain in the center, a lion rearing back on his hind legs with a broken spear in his chest. From his open mouth poured a stream of water that fell into a stone-rimmed pool.

"That is where I swim," volunteered Kara. "It is not far, but I can beat you across it. Would you like me to try?" And with that pagan innocence which characterized her she started to drop skirt and bodice.

"Another time," said Nikka, laughing. "This is lower than the rest of the house, isn't it?"

She assented, and it was then that I recovered from the bewilderment inspired

by the unexpected charm of the picture and realized for the first time what it meant. The bull above the entrance-door, the hall, the stair, the marks of heavy hinges at its foot where a gate had hung, the room where the women sat, an atrium, in the old Roman architecture, the garden—by Jove, even the cedars!—the Garden of the Cedars and the Fountain of the Lion! It was exactly as the first Hugh had described it in the missing half of the instructions which we had found.

I dug my fingers into Nikka's arm.

"Yes, yes," he said quietly in English.

"I see it, too. But do not let yourself seem excited."

Involuntarily I repeated to myself from those sentences of the instructions which we all had memorized:

From the center of the fountain take four paces west toward the wall of the atrium. Then walk three paces north. Underfoot is a red stone an ell square——

The center of the fountain—where could that be? The pool stretched sidewise to us as we stood in front of the atrium. Plainly, then, the instructions meant from the center of the pedestal on which the lion was perched. I stepped out from the portico, measured with my eye the distance from the pedestal west toward the wall of the atrium, and walked north on the paved walk which rimmed the central grass-plot.

The flagging here, while naturally worn by the passage of time, was as even as though it had been laid yesterday. It was composed of blocks of red and brown granite in a checker-board pattern, but they seemed to be only a foot square. It was not until I passed the center of the fountain that I discovered that at regular intervals a larger stone was inserted in the design. And, sure enough, I found a red one about three and a half paces, as I roughly made it, in a northerly line from the point I had calculated as four paces west of the center of the fountain.

Kara had no eyes for any one save Nikka, and I ventured to stamp my sandaled heel on the stone as I trod over it. It gave back no different sound from those on either side of it, but when my first disappointment had passed I told myself that this was no more than could have been expected. Had it sounded hollow, surely some person in the course of seven centuries would have

noticed it, and, whether possessed of knowledge of the treasure or not, must have had sufficient enterprise to attempt to find what it concealed.

I walked on round the garden, determined to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity to survey the ground. But there was nothing else to see. On one side, the porticoes fringed a blank wall, evidently belonging to the adjoining property. Vernon King afterward said that at some period this group of buildings of the Palace of the Bucoleon had been cut up into separate structures and built together in blocks. On the side toward the Bosphorus, a wing of the building we had traversed intervened.

I FINALLY abandoned my investigations because I gathered from the tones of their voices that Nikka was having an argument with Kara. When I came up to them Nikka was offering her Watkins' watch, but she dashed it to the pavement, burst into tears and fled back the way we had come.

"What have you been doing, Lothario?" I demanded in French.

Nikka looked very unhappy.

"She wanted me to kiss her. I—I offered her that watch, in the first place, to make up for showing her up the way I did—that was to impress Tokalji, of course. And then I thought she had been pretty decent to us since."

"I dare say she has been," I agreed. "For a purpose, to be sure."

"Oh, that!" Nikka's discomfort was heart-warming. "She doesn't know any better, Jack. I've seen her kind before—at least none as bright as she or quite as pretty, but the same kind of untamed wildcats. We Gipsies spoil our women if they have any spirit. And she—well, you could see for yourself. She has been brought up in this atmosphere. She doesn't know what it means to be refused anything. She—she's all right, you know."

"I know she's the prettiest savage creature I've ever seen," I returned dryly. "Since she is the first, however, that may not mean much. You seem to be very anxious to explain her savagery, my friend. Why didn't you kiss her?"

Nikka picked up the watch and examined the broken crystal.

"I don't think we'd better stay here," he answered vaguely. "Women's quarters, and

all that sort of thing. Hello! Here's Tokalji now."

The Gipsy chief stalked out of the atrium.

"What have you been doing to the girl?" he growled.

"I wouldn't kiss her," said Nikka, with a sudden grin.

Tokalji's bearded face was cracked by a burst of gargoyle laughter.

"You are a wise one! I said so! I know men—I, Beran Tokalji! But hark you." His tone took on an edge. "Be careful with her. She is all I have, and I give her to no man I do not know. You come in out of the street, whoever you are. Prove yourself, and I can make much of you. But until you prove yourself—you and this Frank jackal with you—you walk carefully and jump when you hear the lash."

"Is she your daughter?" asked Nikka.

"Never mind who she is! What are you doing here?"

"She was showing us the fountain."

"That is all right. But the young men stay out of this house. I want no troubles over women in the tribe. Remember that, you two."

Tokalji herded us through the atrium and up the stairs into the large chamber with the apse where he himself slept.

"Sit!" he ordered roughly, motioning to several stools. "I have something to say to you two."

He went to a chest in the corner and drew from it a bottle of rakia—raw Oriental brandy. I looked about for a cup as he handed it to Nikka, but my comrade, better versed in the customs of the country, deftly wiped the bottle's neck with his coat sleeve, hoisted it for a long dram, wiped the neck again and passed it to me. I imitated him as well as I could, although a passing acquaintance with cognac in my days as a student at the Beaux Arts and also in the A. E. F. did not save me from a choking sensation as the fiery liquid burned my gullet. Tokalji regarded me with contempt when I handed it to him, tilted the bottle bottom up and drained the equivalent of a water-glass with gusto.

"There!" he said, setting the bottle on the floor. "We'll talk better wet than dry—although I will say, Giorgi, your friend is no great hand at the bottle. I hope he's a better thief."

"Only try him," said Nikka eagerly.

"Humph. I may. But to be frank with you, my lad, I don't want you two for a thieving job. It's something more difficult, and the reward will be in proportion."

NIKKA permitted his fingers to caress the hilt of his knife.

"We should enjoy a good killing," he hinted.

"No, no, Giorgi! That will come in time, but whatever else you do, you must keep your knife sheathed in this business. As it happens, the men we are after are worth more to us alive than dead."

"Whatever you say, *Voivode*," answered Nikka equably. "But what about your own men? They're a likely-looking lot."

"Yes. But not so many of them have the gifts I require in this service," retorted Tokalji, lifting the bottle once more. "They are clever thieves and fighters, but what I require now is men who can follow and spy. My best men at that work have failed to produce anything worth while in two weeks, and, moreover, they have become known to our enemies. I must have new men—and abler men." He bent his brows in a ferocious grimace. "If you succeed, you are my friends. You shall have rich pickings. But if you fail you had better leave Stamboul."

Nikka dropped his hand again on his knife.

"Why threaten?" he asked coolly.

Tokalji glared at him.

"Beware how you defy Beran Tokalji in his own den!" he snarled. "Well, let it pass. It shows you have spirit. But do not tempt me too far, Giorgi."

Nikka rose.

"I am a free man," he answered casually. "So is my comrade, Jakka. We sell our knives and our fingers to the best bidder, and if we don't like the treatment we say so and leave."

Tokalji regarded him uneasily.

"Here!" he said gruffly, offering the bottle. "Drink again and think better of it, man. No harm is done by plain talk. That's right! Sit. I get along with those who don't fear me too much. You will not be sorry you strayed in here, but you must deal honestly with me. I am buying your wits, and I expect something for my money."

"So far, it is only we who have paid," retorted Nikka. "How much are we to get?"

"How much? It depends upon how much we win. There will be hundreds of gold pieces for every man if it goes right."

"If what goes right?"

Tokalji hitched his stool closer to us.

"See, you, Giorgi—and you, too, Jakka, if you can understand any of this talk—there are two Franks at the hotel in Pera, where all the rich Franks stay."

"We saw it this morning," assented Nikka.

"These two Franks are an English lord and his servant. With them in the venture are two others, an *Amerikansky*, Nash, and one named Zaranko, who, they say, is a fiddler and was one of our people in his youth."

"I have heard of that one," said Nikka.

"Would you know his face?"

"I think I would."

"Good! Above everything else we wish to learn what has become of the *Amerikansky* and the fiddler and when they are to arrive. Also, there are two more Franks at the hotel, a man named King and his daughter. They, I think, are *Amerikansky*, like Nash. We do not understand how they come to be in this business. If they are really in it, perhaps it would be worth while to kidnap the girl. We might hold her to blackmail her friends."

"But what do they seek that you also seek?" asked Nikka.

"If you breath it to a soul I will cut out your heart with my own knife, I, Beran Tokalji," replied the Gipsy chief by way of preface. "They have the secret to a treasure."

"What?" exclaimed Nikka, with great pretense of astonishment. "Here in Stamboul?"

"Close by, my lad; close by. They know its location, but if we are smart we should be able to take it from them as soon as they reveal their knowledge. It is for us to find out their secret or wring it from them—by torture, if necessary."

"This is a job worth doing!" cried Nikka, jumping up. "Jakka and I will be diligent. We will start now to trail the Franks. Only tell us how they look—or send one with us who knows and can point them out to us."

But Tokalji barred the door to him.

"Not so fast—not so fast!" he answered, with his gargoyle laughter. "The job has waited for you some time. It can wait a few hours longer. I prefer to keep you under my wing for the night—until we become better acquainted. You look like the right sort of fellow, Giorgi, and your friend is not so poor a man for a Frank; but, after all, as I said to you, you came in to me from the street this afternoon, and all I know about you is that you are a good thief.

"It is not enough. I must know more. And, for another thing, it will help you to wait the return of the two I have out watching these Franks in Pera. They have not found much, but they can tell you something of what the Franks do and how they spend their time. So make yourselves comfortable. You shall eat heartily, and this evening Kara will dance in the courtyard, as she promised you. That is worth waiting for, Giorgi. Hey, hey!"

He stepped aside and waved us permission to go; and we walked through the courtyard to the crumbling wall which rimmed the Bosphorus at one point, its base a rubble heap, its battlements in fragments, its platform overgrown with weeds. From its top we could look down on the margin of beach loaded with boulders, and the ruins of what had been a jetty enclosing a little harbor for the imperial pleasure-galleys.

"It would not be difficult to climb up here," I said idly, pointing to the gaps between the stones, and the sloping piles of boulders. "Does he suspect us, Nikka?"

"No; that is only his Gipsy caution. He thinks we are too good to be true. He needed what we seem to be—and—behold!—we arrive. He has waited long. He feels he can wait a little longer."

"I'm afraid he may wait a little too long for us," I answered. "It's possible some one may happen in who will recognize us."

"There's a chance," Nikka admitted, after a moment's reflection. "But they saw us under entirely different circumstances before this. Why, Jack, even Hugh didn't know us."

"But if I talk?"

"Don't talk. I'll tell everybody you are a sulky devil—a killer whose deeds haunt him. They'll leave you alone. Gipsies respect temperamental criminals. But

come along; we mustn't stay by ourselves. We'll be suspected of considering ourselves too highly or else having something to conceal."

SO WE strolled over to the young-men's quarters, and while I wrapped myself in the gloomy atmosphere that I considered was typical of a temperamental killer, Nikka swapped anecdotes of crime with the others who drifted in and out. I looked for Kara, but she was nowhere in view. After Nikka had once established my character the Gipsies gave me a wide berth, and I had nothing to do but smoke and appear murderous. And I must say I got sick of the part. I was the first man up when Mother Kathene swung the stew-pot out of the chimney and old Zitzi and Lilli began to distribute tin plates and cups in an irregular circle on the floor. It was poor food, but plenty, and, anyway, it broke the monotony of being an abandoned criminal.

With the passing of the twilight the young men moved into the courtyard. In the middle of the open space was a black smirch on the paving, and here they built a fire of driftwood collected from the beach under the wall. It was a tribute to the immemorial habits of their race. Even here in the crowded city they must close the day with a discussion of its events round a tribal blaze, exactly as they would have done upon the road, exactly as thousands of other Gipsy tribes were doing at that very moment in other parts of the world.

A buzz of talk rose. The primitive Gipsy fiddles and guitars began to twang softly. Nikka was the center of a gossiping group. Men and women from the opposite side of the court joined the circle. Young girls, with the lithe grace of the Gipsy, as unself-conscious as animals, sifted through the ranks of the bachelors. Beran Tokalji himself, a cigarette drooping sardonically from the corner of his mouth, stalked out and sat down with Nikka.

In the changing shadows beyond the range of the firelight children dodged and played unhindered by their elders. High overhead the stars shone like fireflies under a purple vault. And from the spreading mass of Stamboul echoed a gentle hum—the hum of a giant hive, a myriad voices talking, singing, praying, laughing, shouting, cursing, screaming. None of the

discordant night noises of the West. No whistle-blasts, no shrieking of flat wheels on tortured rails, no honking of motor-horns, no clamor of machinery. Only the drone of the hive.

A man raised his voice in a song, and the exultantly melancholy, pæan to Beauty blended with the other sounds like a skilfully woven thread in a tapestry. It died away so gradually as to seem as if it had never been. The fiddles sighed to silence in a burst of expiring passion.

Nobody spoke for several moments. Music was bred in the bone of these wild folk. It held them as could nothing else.

"What of Giorgi Bordu?" said Tokalji presently. "Does he sing or play or dance?"

Nikka reached out his hand almost eagerly.

"I will play if you wish. I vowed not to touch the fiddle again, but——"

His fingers closed lovingly on the crude instrument, and he cuddled it under his chin. His bow swept the strings in a torrent of arpeggios. He stood up and strode into the firelight as if upon a stage. And then he began to play, plaintively at first, in a minor key. There were the noises of the night, a crackling fire, animals stirring, the cry of a child wakening. The music brightened, quickened, became joyous. You felt the rays of the sun, the comfort of work. Men and women danced and sang. A harsh note intervened. There was a quarrel. Anger yelled from the strings. Turmoil ensued. Faster and faster went the tune. And then peace, and the measure became slower, almost stately.

The caravan had passed on. A forest encompassed it. Boughs clashed overhead; birds twittered and sang. Cool shadows fell athwart the path. But the way grew steep. The music told of the rocks and the slippery mud where a stream had overflowed, of the steady climb, of the endurance required. The caravan reached the heights. A chill wind blew, but fair before them stretched a pleasant land, and the descent was easy to the warm brown road that wound across the plain. Sunset and camp again, firelight, the moon overhead, talk of love, the sensuous movement of a dance. Then, languorous and slow, the coming of sleep.

I did not know it, but I was listening to

the composition of Zaranko's "Gipsy Sonata," Opus 27, which some day, I suppose, will be as famous as the "Revolutionary Étude" or the "Hungarian Rhapsodies" or Beethoven's dream of the moonlight. But no audience will ever hear it with greater appreciation than did those ragged Gipsies who sat round the fire in the dirty courtyard of the house in Sokaki Masyeri. As Nikka resumed his place in the outer circle, only the whispering of the flames broke the stillness. The very children were frozen on their knees, drunk with the ecstasy of melody.

"HEY!" called Beran Tokalji, first to shake off the spell. "I do not wonder you vowed not to touch the fiddle if you like the open road. With that bow of yours, Giorgi Bordu, you could wring hundreds of gold pieces from the Franks. You play like the redcoats in the khans in Buda and Bucharest. Hey, hey! I have heard Niketu and Stoyan Mirko and Karaji, and they were not to be compared with you. It is seldom the bravest men have the touch of the fiddle."

Others spoke up readily in praise or asked questions as to Nikka's opinion on moot points of harmony and the desirable methods of interpreting various Gipsy songs. They would have had him play again, but he refused. I think he was emotionally exhausted.

"We have no fiddler to match with you," remarked Tokalji, "and the bagpipes and the flute are not fit for real music. But our maidens can dance. Hey, girls; come out, shy ones! Let the strangers view your grace."

They giggled among themselves, and swayed into a group that was as spontaneously instinct with rhythm as an old Greek temple-frieze. But suddenly they split apart.

"Kara will dance!" they cried. "Let Kara dance for the strangers!"

And Kara floated into the circle of firelight like a spirit of the forest. She still wore only the scanty madder-red skirt and torn bodice. The cloud of her hair tumbled below her waist. Her tiny naked feet barely touched the ground. Slowly she whirled, and the Gipsy fiddles caught her time. A man with cymbals clashed an accompaniment. A flute whistled soprano.



"Ho, Giorgi Bordul! You who do not fear the knife—will you dance the knife-dance with me?"

She increased the tempo; she varied her steps. She was a flower shrinking beneath the grass. She was a dove pursued by a falcon. She was a maiden deserted by her lover. She was a fairy hovering above the world.

We who watched her were breathless with the joy of the spectacle, and when she sank to the ground in a little pile of rags and hair as the music ended, I thought she must be worn out. But she bounded up at once, breathing regularly, radiating vitality.

"Now I will dance the knife-dance!" she exclaimed. "Who will dance with me?"

And before any could answer her she seized a blazing stick from the fire and ran round the circle, waving it over her head until she came to where Nikka sat.

"Ho, Giorgi Bordu! You who do not fear the knife—will you dance the knife-dance with me?"

Every eye in the circle was fixed on Nikka, for, although I did not know it then, to have refused her invitation would have been a deadly insult, equivalent to a declaration of enmity toward her family and tribe. Similarly, acceptance of it amounted to an admission that he considered her favorably as a wife, without definitely committing him to matrimony.

Nikka did not hesitate. He stepped to her side. She slipped one arm round his waist, and with the other swung her torch until it showered sparks over the circle.

"Hi!" she cried.

"Hi!" echoed Nikka.

And they pranced round the fire while the music began an air so fiercely wild that it made the blood tingle to listen to it. Then she flung down her torch and tore free from Nikka's arm. He followed her. She eluded him. Round and round they tore, keeping step the while. Now she accepted him; now she rejected him. At last he turned from her, arms folded, contemptuously unmoved. She wooed him with rhythmic ardor. He denied her. She drew her knife; he drew his. Eyes glaring, lips pinched, they circled one another, feinting, striking, leaping, posturing.

"Click!" The blades struck together.

"Hi! Hi!" they cried.

"Click! Clack! Click!" went the knife-blades.

"Ho! Ho!" they shouted.

The game was to see how near you could

come without cutting. To avoid hurt, the dancers required quick eyes and agile bodies. The blades flashed like meteors in the shifting light, wheeling and slashing and stabbing. In the beginning Kara forced the pace. Nikka retired before her, rather than risk doing her harm. But slowly he assumed the mastery. His knife was always at her throat, and, active as she was, he refused to be shaken off. She fended desperately, panting now, bright-eyed and flushed. But he pressed her. Their blades clashed; he gave his a twist, and hers dropped from her hand.

He seized her, forcing her back across his knee, knife upraised to strike, while the fiddles clutched at one's nerves and the cymbals clanged with wicked glee. The scene—Nikka's tall figure, with the poised knife, and the lithe, slender form he held, expressing in every curve and line its tempestuous, untamed soul—brought to my memory the song I had heard him sing one morning in the music-room at Chesby:

And, best of all, I shall hear
The wild, mad Tzigane songs,
Cruel and gay and lustful,
Like fiddles and clanging gongs.

And in the glare of the camp-fires
I shall see the Tziganes dance—
Women with lithe, round bodies,
Men straight as a Haiduk's lance.

And perhaps a wild brown maiden
Will seek me——

"Crash!" boomed a knock on the street door. And "Rap-rap-rap!" it was repeated. "Crash!" again.

THE music stopped. Nikka released his partner and Kara stooped quickly and snatched up her knife, tossing the hair out of her eyes, heedless of the rags that slipped off her shoulders.

Men looked at each other uncertainly. Hands crept to waist-sashes.

"Hey!" said Tokalji. "Who can it be in such a hurry at this hour—who doesn't know the signal?"

"Crash!" The door resounded under the battering of a pistol-butt.

The women and children—all save Kara—withdrew into the shadows. The men gathered together. Tokalji crossed to the entrance.

"Less noise there!" he shouted threateningly. "This is a peaceful house."

But his manner changed the moment he opened the wicket. What he said we could not hear, but we saw him quickly turn the lock and throw back a leaf of the door, salaaming low as he stepped aside. Six men burst in, four of them in European clothes, and Nikka and I exchanged a glance of apprehension as we recognized the broad shoulders of their leader and heard his snarling voice.

Toutou Lafitte had arrived. With him were Hilyer, Serge Vassilivich and Hilmi Bey. The two who brought up the rear, somewhat sulky and fearful, were the spies we had seen in front of the Pera Palace that morning.

"Can I trust nobody to fulfil my orders?" rasped Toutou, striding toward the fire. "I tell you to spare no efforts—and I come to find you singing and dancing round a fire! Is that working? Is that carrying out our treaty? But all are the same. My best people fail me."

His green eyes shone evilly; his hands writhed with suppressed ferocity. Tokalji, having refastened the door, followed him across the courtyard. The Gipsy looked uncomfortable, but showed no fear.

"What could we have done that we have not done?" he retorted. "Was it our fault that you lost track of the two missing ones? As for the English lord and his servant, my two men, whom I see with you, have shadowed them day and night."

"And lost them to-day, as they admit," snarled Toutou; "lost them for a whole day! Who knows what has been accomplished in that time?"

"You are right there," agreed Tokalji coolly, "and I have just picked two new men to take their places. Zlacho and Petko are good enough for ordinary thievery, but this job seems to be above them."

"That is well," said Toutou, partly mollified. "There must be a change in our methods or we shall fail in this *coup*. I decided to hasten on to Constantinople with my colleagues because I was sure the two who have escaped us must come here sooner or later, and whenever they come we shall find them. But I cannot do everything. It is for you to follow their trails."

"Never fear—we shall," replied Tokalji. "My new men start out at once. One of

them is a Frank, like yourself; the other is a Tzigane."

"Ha! Let me see that Frank!" exclaimed Toutou. "I know many of the Franks who live with the Tziganes."

"Step out, Giorgi Bordu and Jakka!" called Tokalji.

NIKKA sunk his fingers in my arm in a warning grip and we stepped forth from the group of Tziganes clustered in front of the fire. There was at least a chance that we would not be identified—but its value was demonstrated the instant the firelight splashed over Nikka's aquiline face and tense, febrile body.

"Surely I have seen that lean fellow before," piped Hilmi Bey, pointing at Nikka.

"I saw them standing near the Frank lord and his servant in Pera this morning," said one of the spies.

"What of that?" shouted Tokalji angrily. "It is true they followed the Franks—which was more than you could do, Petko—and robbed them."

"No; the Franks followed them," protested Zlacho, the other spy.

"You lie, you dog!" bellowed Tokalji. "You think to discredit them because they will do the work you bungled."

Vassilivich pushed in front of the newcomers.

"Is it my imagination," he inquired softly, "or does the stocky one bear a resemblance to the *Amerikansky*, Nash?"

"By Jove! I think you're right!" exclaimed Hilyer, speaking for the first time.

"Be ready!" hissed Nikka from the corner of his mouth, without shifting his eyes from our enemies.

His right hand was thrust into his waist-sash.

"I do not like this business," rasped Toutou, pulling a knife from inside his vest. "Somebody shall be tortured until he tells the truth."

I felt a pressure between Nikka and myself, and Kara's voice whispered:

"Run, you fools! To the House of the Married!"

Nikka's pistol flashed blue in the firelight.

"Shoot, Jack!" he cried.

A ruddy flame jetted from his pistol's muzzle, and the spy, Petko, dropped dead. Toutou Lafitte pushed Zlacho in the line

of fire before himself and dived into the encircling shadows as Zlacho crumpled up with a broken leg. Tokalji, Hilyer, Vassilovich and Hilmi scattered. I swung on my heel and shot twice over the group of Gipsies by the fire. I could not bring myself to shoot at them, for there were women and children close by. Then a bullet whistled past my ear, and Toutou's voice whined:

"No shooting! Use your knives! Take them alive!"

I had a fleeting glimpse of Kara running at me with her knife raised.

"There are only two!" roared Tokalji. "Pull them down!"

"Run!" I heard Nikka shout.

WE PELTED for the house on our left—the House of the Married, as Kara had called it. Despite Toutou's warning, a second bullet spattered on the stones between Nikka and me; but we were poor marks in the half-light, with people running in every direction, many of them uncertain who were friends or who were foes. I turned as I ran and fired into the ground in front of Kara, who was the closest of our pursuers; but she refused to be frightened and actually plunged through the doorway on our heels.

"I'll attend to her!" panted Nikka. "You fasten the door, Jack."

There was a wooden bar, which I dropped into place, and the next minute the framework groaned under a weight of bodies.

"No shooting!" yelled Tokalji. "You fools, you'll have the Frank police in here!"

"One hundred napoleons a head for them!" barked Toutou.

The uproar redoubled, and then Tokalji evidently invaded the throng hammering at the door.

"Leave that door alone!" he snapped. "You're wasting time. Go through the windows!"

"Come on, Nikka!" I urged. "We can't guard every point. We must run for it."

"But what about this?" demanded Nikka whimsically. He jerked his pistol-muzzle at Kara, sitting demurely on the floor, playing with her knife. "If we show our backs she'll knife us or open the door—and, besides, where shall we go?"

"Tie her up," I answered impatiently.

Kara, who, of course, could not understand a word of what we were saying, laughed with glee.

"Do you think I am your enemy?" she demanded in the Tzigane dialect. "I tell you I am your friend. See!" And she tossed her knife across the room. "I came with you to help you, Giorgi Bordu."

"My name is Nikka Zaranko," he answered shortly.

"What matters your name?" She leaped up and flung her arms round his neck. "It is you I love—not your name."

Nikka eyed me sheepishly across her shoulder.

"But see, you little one," he remonstrated; "this is no time for talking of love. We may be dead in five minutes."

"Oh, no," she said, releasing him nevertheless. "You shall be off and away. I, Kara"—and it was ridiculous how she strutted in the manner of Tokalji, himself—"will set you free—because I love you."

"But I am the enemy of your tribe—your enemy," replied Nikka. "You do not realize what you do."

"I care not who you are," she insisted. "I love you. I care *that* for the tribe!" She snapped her fingers. "But come!" she added, as a crash sounded outside. "They have broken in a window. Follow me."

She led us into an adjoining room, where, in the thickness of the wall, a narrow stairway corkscrewed upward, debouching on the second floor. Here was a long hall, with rooms opening off it, their windows mostly on the inner courtyard—the Garden of the Cedars of the first Hugh's instructions. She turned to the right and entered one of the rooms. A ladder leaned against the wall below a trap-door in the roof.

In a corner stood a bedstead, which she stripped of its clothes, revealing the cords that served for springs.

"Cut those with your knife," she said. "When we take to the roofs, we shall need them to help us down again."

Nikka did as she directed, while I shut the door and piled the few articles of furniture against it. Tokalji's men were in full cry down-stairs.

How will the foolhardy treasure-seekers fare in their perilous predicament? See the next installment of this thrilling story in August **EVERYBODY'S**—out July 14th.

Dog Eat Dog

*Never Get so Absorbed in Your Own
Schemes That You May Ignore What
the Other Fellow Is Planning to Do*

By E. R. Punshon

THE stranger looked about him with interest, and thought that never had he seen—or, indeed, supposed to exist—so dark, so squalid and so unsavory a place as this somber, sinister court. In fact, it was a spot that even the police did not care to visit unless they were in force.

On the steps before each tall, narrow house untidy women sprawled and gossiped, and in the body of the court children played at unchildish games. But gossip and play had alike ceased as the stranger entered this court where strangers so seldom came; and now a man or two appeared, blinking and sullen, and then the stranger perceived that two other men had lounged carelessly into a position between him and the entry to the court. Then one of the men coughed, and straightway women and children vanished, though the stranger had the impression that they all were still watching from the dirty windows or peeping through the cracks of the doors that all hung open with a sort of sullen and menacing hospitality.

Now he was alone in the court save for the two men behind him and the two others, one on each hand, and he smiled a little, but was wary as he said aloud,

"Perhaps one of you gentlemen could tell me if Mr. Moggs lives anywhere about here?"

The question had its effect. They started and stared, looking uneasily at each other and at him. One of them whistled sharply. A boy appeared on the instant—so quickly that it was difficult to tell which open doorway had shot him forth. The

man who had whistled jerked a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the entry. The boy seemed to understand at once and vanished down the entry into the street beyond. The two men standing one on each side of the stranger edged a little nearer.

"Friend of yours, eh, Mr. Moggs?" one of them muttered hoarsely and let a length of lead piping slip down his sleeve into his hand.

"Old pals, perhaps, are you?" the other asked in a sort of gruff whisper, and began abstractedly to pick his teeth with a long, keen-bladed, sharp-pointed knife.

"Never seen him," answered the stranger. "Never even heard of him before to-day. But I've got a message for him."

"Oh!" one of them said doubtfully. "A message, eh? Who from?" And as he spoke the boy they had sent out came flying back into the court.

"All clear, all quiet," he reported; "not a cop in sight, and no sign of nothing doing nowhere."

He waited a moment as if to see if further orders were going to be given and then vanished again.

The man picking his teeth with his knife ceased that pleasant occupation and, balancing the long-bladed weapon on the palm of his hand, said slowly:

"Pals is pals, and stick together as such. But spies and such like is sometimes found dead."

"Very likely," agreed the stranger. "And I suppose spies and such like always take care to let every one know what they are—walk_about just as you please, do they?"

Well, I've a message for Mr. Moggs. Can I give it him?"

"What sort of message? What about?" growled the man with the lead piping.

"Are you Mr. Moggs?" inquired the stranger.

The man he spoke to went very pale and retreated a step or two, and his companion grinned broadly.

"He is not," he said. "No more am I," he added hastily, as the stranger turned to him.

"Ah!" said the stranger.

"Who is the message from?" asked the other.

"From young Willie King, the Glasgow boy," answered the stranger, and again what he said had its effect, for they drew together and whispered.

"Well, what about him?" asked then the man with the knife. "Speak low," he added warningly, having almost whispered himself.

"He's took," said the stranger. "They caught him in the Bryce Building. As he had two bombs and a gun in his pocket and had just asked if he might have five minutes conversation with Mr. Bryce on important matters, they seemed peeved, and the police took him away."

They were all clustered round him now, and they began again to mutter to each other in broken sentences, giving him the while glances of obvious doubt and mistrust. Apparently they were a good deal upset and disturbed, and one of them said abruptly,

"Is that true?"

"Might be healthier occupations," suggested the stranger, "than coming here to tell lies."

"That's so," agreed the other, apparently convinced. "Anyway, you had better see Mr. Moggs— What's your game?"

The stranger looked at him steadily.

"Maybe," he said, "I don't love Bryce, either. Maybe I've no reason to. Maybe men like him don't get as rich as him without ruining other men. Maybe there's other reasons."

His questioners now appeared more satisfied.

"All right," answered the one of them who held a knife and seemed their leader, and then said, with a sudden vehemence: "Did Billy King say anything? Did he split?"

"Not so far," answered the stranger. "But of course you can't ever tell. The police have ways——"

"Well, he didn't know much, anyway," the other muttered.

"Had he any papers on him?" asked the stranger.

"Papers? What do you think?" the other retorted. "You saw him collared, did you?"

"Yes—and tried to warn him," answered the stranger. "I heard something said, and I whispered to him to get out quick. It was too late. He had only time to tell me to get here and tell Mr. Moggs—seems I'm telling every one else instead— If I had been able to get hold of his bomb I would have planted it myself. I would give a good deal to see Bryce go up in fire before his time."

The man with the knife smiled approval.

"That's the stuff!" he said. "A pity about Billy King, though— Well, come with me."

HE LED the way into one of the neighboring houses and up to the top floor, where a door that faced them seemed to be in better repair than most in this ruinous place. On this door the guide knocked. A voice answered, and the man entered. In a few minutes he came out again.

"You're to go in," he said. "Don't tell no lies," he added. "It ain't safe—not with him—not with Mr. Moggs."

Without replying, the stranger entered the room. He found it a filthy, squalid apartment, with an unwashed floor, ruinous furniture. At a rickety table in the center of this apartment sat a little old man in a dirty dressing-gown. He was nearly bald; his face was clean-shaven and lined with an extraordinary complexity of wrinkles, and his eyes were exceedingly bright and clear, giving to his whole appearance a remarkable air of vigor and determination. When the stranger entered, he stared at him for a long time in silence, and then he said in a high, wheezy voice:

"There's a chair over there—one leg's loose; so be careful. Well, what do you want?"

The other did not answer at first. His intent and burning gaze met full that of the old man, and for two or three minutes they remained thus, staring full at each

other. It was the old man who spoke first.

"So Billy King has failed, eh?" he said. "Well, I never trusted that young man too much— But you took a risk, you know, in coming here to tell us that."

The stranger laughed harshly.

"A man who has nothing to lose risks little," he said.

"A man has always his life."

"Oh—if he calls his life anything," agreed the stranger.

AGAIN they were silent, and again they watched each other intently, the eyes of the one no less fierce and burning than those of the other. The old man said slowly:

"You look more like the stuff we want. Well, what made you think of coming here?"

"Why, I thought I might succeed where your Billy King failed," the stranger answered. "That is, if you mean business. What have you got against Mr. Bryce?"

"He is the representative of a system we are out to destroy," the other answered. "Why should he live in a palace on the Surrey hills and I here." For the first time he removed his gaze from the stranger to let it wander round the squalid room. "Why should one man have everything and another nothing—one man be able to stuff himself with cake and another have not a crust of bread to gnaw? There is war between his sort and our sort—that is all."

"You have nothing against him personally, then?" the stranger asked.

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"This is not a personal matter at all," he said. "I have never even seen the man. War is never personal. So far as we know, Bryce is no worse than the rest—a little bolder, perhaps, a little more daring—a strong man, one who knows what he wants and gets it—and so much the worse for those in his way. That is why I chose him, because he is worth removing. This is a struggle between two systems, two philosophies." He paused and once more fixed his strange and burning gaze upon his visitor. "It's bottom dog against top dog."

"Dog eat dog, eh?" the stranger said reflectively.

"Yes," answered the old man, and his eyes blazed more fiercely, even, than before; "they have eaten us long enough. Now it is time for us to eat them."

"Yet," objected the stranger, "if we dispose of Bryce, it will only mean that another will take his place."

"Bombs are cheap and easy made," the old man answered. "For every Bryce a bomb. Besides, you are wrong. Bryces are rare; men like him are always rare. Who among us would take my place? Not one of them could begin to. If I went, the whole thing would fall to pieces. And it's much the same with them. They have more than us, but not so many more. Remove this Bryce and the next one and the next one, and the whole thing will go."

"Just as you think it would on your side if you went," observed the stranger thoughtfully. "Perhaps you are right. I noticed those men outside, when they spoke of you, seemed a little—respectful."

"Oh, they know," the other answered, with a certain swagger that sat most oddly on his old and emaciated figure. "They know there's no one to take my place."

"Well, that means," the stranger said slowly, "that if the police were to——"

"Arrest me?" the old man said, and laughed. "They can't," he said. "They know something about me, but not much, and they can't do anything because they have no evidence. I take care of that. I put nothing on paper. Everything, everything—all our organization is here, here." He tapped his forehead. "They can do nothing without proof, and I see that they have none," he said again. "They found nothing on Willie King, did they?"

"Two bombs and a pistol. They seemed to think that something."

"Proof against him, not against any one else," retorted the old man. "Why, he doesn't even know himself where the bombs came from. He found them one day on a seat in the park. There's nothing of any interest he can tell—no more than you could if you went straight back from here to the nearest police station. Of course, Willie King may tell the police about this place, but they know of it already, and if they come they'll find nothing, because there's nothing to find except what's here." He tapped his forehead again. "We write nothing down. For example, when you leave me, I shall give you a bit of paper. But it will be blank. Only, it will be cut in a certain shape. That will mean you are to be accepted as a comrade and helped.

Or if it is cut in another shape, that will mean you are a spy and are to be knocked on the head and then dropped in the river. But even if your body were found, no one would notice a bit of blank paper cut in a certain shape they might find in your pocket."

"Ingenious," commented the stranger.

"We are more than ingenious," the old man boasted. "When it's dog eat dog, we have to be. Well, you say you think you might succeed where Billy King failed. What makes you think that?"

"For one thing, because I have means of getting inside Mr. Bryce's Surrey home whenever I wish to."

"That might be useful," the old man agreed, "if you're sure——"

"Oh, quite."

"Why are you willing to make the attempt? What's your reason?"

"Bryce is my worst enemy," the stranger said slowly. After a pause he added: "He married the woman I loved. But for him, I might be—well, not what I am now. But all that's my business. It doesn't matter to you why I'm willing. I'm not asking you to trust me. All I want is that you should let me—find two bombs on a seat in the park. And afterward give me help to lie quiet for a week or two."

"Seems all right—if you mean it," the old man said slowly. "But I don't know that I quite trust you—somehow. Still, it will be easy to provide you with a bomb, and if you make good use of it— Suppose you come back here this time to-morrow. I shall have had time to make arrangements then—some inquiries, too."

"That's all right," the other answered, rising. "You can make as many inquiries as you like. All I want I've told you. I'll go now."

"Better take this with you," the old man said, and picking up a pair of rusty scissors, he cut a scrap of paper into a square. "Show that in the palm of your hand to the men you'll find on the stairs," he said.

"You think of everything," remarked the stranger admiringly, "or nearly everything. Excuse me," he said, and, bending forward, he took the lean and withered throat of that old man in a grip that was as fierce as it was strong and fatal.

There was not so much as a cry; there was hardly a movement. Indeed, the

old man's life fled from him beneath that deadly pressure as the flame of a candle goes out at the careless puff of a child.

WHEN he was sure that all was over, the stranger let the old man's body fall back softly into his chair.

"Foolish to mess about with bombs," he muttered, "when it's so easy to kill a man—if you know how."

He looked thoughtfully round the room and then let himself out. On the stairs two or three men were lounging. He opened his hand and showed them the small square of paper it contained. They nodded with a friendly air and let him pass. As he turned out of the court into the street he thought, but was not sure, that he heard a certain commotion behind. He had not even need to quicken his pace in order to become lost in the busy traffic of the street.

An hour or two later he was ascending the steps of a great house upon the Surrey hills, and the butler who opened the door looked very relieved on seeing who it was.

"Mrs. Bryce's been very anxious, sir," he said, "very anxious indeed."

"Is that Mr. Bryce—is that you, John?" a voice cried, and a young and pretty woman came running toward him. "John!" she cried. "What has happened? Is it true? Why didn't you come straight home?"

"There's nothing to worry about." He smiled. "A young fool with a bomb in his pocket called at the office, but he was in such a state of excitement it was easy to see something was wrong. He broke down as soon as we questioned him and told me all about it. I'm paying his passage abroad and giving him something to make a fresh start on. Quite possibly he will turn out all right. We didn't even bother to report it to the police. The police are best kept out of these little affairs when possible—they make such a helpless fuss."

"I don't know how you can treat it so lightly." Mrs. Bryce sighed. "And I don't know how you can have any enemies."

"My dear," he said, "a man's worst enemy is always himself."

"You must take precautions," she urged.

"Oh, I have," he answered; "effective precautions. There will be no danger in the future. And now I must go and wash my hands. I've had some dirty work to do, and they need cleaning."

A Novelette

The Diamond-back

*Lee Powell Promised Nancy and His Constituents a
Bloodless Régime—a Large Order for the Sheriff of
a Border County*

By Carlyle Graham Raht

Illustration by Sidney H. Riesenberg

HOSPITAL CAÑON dozed in soft sunlight; the air shimmered with warmth; no wind stirred, yet from back in the heavy foliage somewhere came a rustling noise, insistent, vibrant, as if dead leaves shivered violently. Down where the cañon spilled out in broad reaches lay the ghosts of a dead generation—the buildings of old Fort Davis—a tangle of wild-wood, melting adobe walls and sloughing roofs. When that ghost was a living power, it had held the Apaches in awe.

The Indians were gone; the soldiers were gone, but there remained a menace more deadly than the Indians—a menace against which neither soldier nor civilian could safely guard, a menace nurtured in the clefts and brambles of the Crouching Lion. On a jutting ledge near the top of the high back wall, a score of rattlesnakes sprawled, huge diamond-backs, rousing in the warmth to sluggish activity.

The particular cause of the disturbance was an immense fellow whom the sunshine had tempted forth. He was a thing of beauty, if not a joy forever. The markings of the diamonds—black-lined, within this, dull gray merging into russet brown—glistened in the brilliant light as if his Majesty had just come from the royal bath at Espy's *teneja* above the cañon rim. He had crawled from a great cleft in the wall, and with the dignity befitting his six-feet-six

was endeavoring to negotiate passage to the warmest spot on the ledge.

He flowed forward in graceful undulations, his great blunted nose thrust a foot in the air and his head canted sidewise inquiringly. A sudden whirl brought him up with a lightning dart backward of head and neck. Danger! A fellow rattler had signaled. True, the alarmist lacked by two feet the stretch of his Majesty, but the rattlesnake's bite is death to his own kind, and each one observes the rights of the other—especially when one has lived the span of fourteen rattles and a button! Wisdom had helped his Majesty to reach great age. Cautiously he retraced his way, seeking other means to reach the enticing ledge.

Before his Majesty had proceeded far, a sound like marshaling thunder overhead shook the ledge.

The diamond-back paused, with tongue flickering. Closer rolled the thunder, joined now by audible screams. Boulders and pebbles catapulted over the heights above, thudded in the midst of the half-slumbering serpents and lashed them into fury as a *remuda* of horses, fresh from relieving their thirst at Espy's *teneja*, with heels flying, teeth playfully snapping, shrilling their exuberance of spirit, crowded the leaders into the narrow trail leading down to the cañon's bottom. With clumsy haste the rattlers for the most part sought

refuge in the cleft. But not so his Majesty.

As the lead horse, slipping, sliding, pushed forward and downward by his impatient followers, passed the ledge, the loosened pebbles sprayed the rattler with stinging pellets. His Majesty whirled a warning and coiled, while the leader, snorting with fear, sprang forward out of danger. The second horse, hearing the song of the *cascabeles*, likewise leaped safely past the ledge. Then his Majesty struck half his length. As his great mouth flew open, the jaw-bones, working as levers, unfolded the inch-long fangs.

A big black gelding was the third in line, and as the fangs of the diamond-back sank into the meaty part of his flank, he squealed in terror. The remainder of the band hesitated on the rim, then heard the terrifying rattle and fled back toward Espy's *teneja*.

THE main residence and business street of Fort Davis terminated at the entrance of the Union Trading Company's store. In front of the Union—as it was called—lounged a dozen or more men, intently watching Felipe, the Mexican delivery-man, load the morning's grocery orders into a light truck. From a yellow frame shack, which bore the legend; "Local and Long Distance," came the call of "Number?" as "central" Gus Stovey applied himself to his duties. Apparently he and Felipe were the only busy men in town. Across an open plot and behind the bank the merry click of pool-balls told of visiting cowboys spending a pleasant hour at Bogue's "club."

No word was spoken until Felipe had maneuvered a sack of potatoes into place and climbed to the driver's seat.

"Who's all them spuds for, Felipe?" asked Barney Good.

"Meesta' Espy," replied Felipe, starting up the car.

"You-all hear about Espy losin' the big black gelding?" remarked Barney. "Snake-bite—up Hospital Cañon."

"I always said them rattlesnakes did more damage than ever the Indians did," observed Jud Weatherly sagely. Jud was manager of the Union. "I recall——"

"Espy says he examined the holes where the fangs went in, an' it was two inches between 'em. In the flank it was."

"That's reachin' pretty high," challenged

Doc Hudnett, who had strolled over from the drug store.

"He might have struck from a shelf of rock," spoke up Lee Powell from his squatting position against the building. "There's a big den of 'em alongside the trail leadin' down in the cañon. If I was Espy I'd fence that off. This makes three good horses he's lost up there."

Lee was the sheriff—a fact which made his opinion respected. He was big-framed, with bronze hair and red-brown eyes that had a trick of smiling when his lips were mute. He was slow-spoken and cumbersome in motion. Both attributes, however, were deceptive, as more than one "bad man" had come to know—after he had leisure to ponder the matter from behind bars in the one-apartment jail. He wore neither badge nor six-shooter. Yet every man present knew he was potentially as dangerous as a loaded gun.

The clatter of a horse's hoofs drew all eyes up the street to watch a pony, mounted by a frail figure, sweeping down upon them.

"It's jest Davy," commented Jud.

"The little devil shore kin ride," said Lee, "even if he is crippled."

"Somewhat proud of him—ain't you, Lee?" Barney grinned.

"Most as if he belonged to me," was the quiet reply.

In a cloud of dust and flying pebbles, Davy's pony stopped within a yard of the squatting sheriff.

"Hey, Lee!" shrilled Davy. "Run in an' git me some wash-soap, will yeh? Ruby White—an' ma's in a big hurry—can't wait for Felipe."

He was a lad of ten, with the elfish, wistful look so often seen on the faces of crippled children. But his bearing was manly; his eyes were brave. He straightened his crutch more securely on the saddle-horn and looked down at Lee with a comradely grin. They were pals, these two, and Davy lorded it over the big sheriff, whom he fairly worshiped.

With an answering smile in his eyes Lee rose and went inside the store. He returned presently with the soap and a bag of candy.

"What kind is it?" asked Davy, peering into the bag. "Geel! That's great! Say, Lee; 'most time to go swimmin'—an'

Espy's *teneja's* full to the brim!" He whirled his pony homeward.

"Lay off that *teneja*, son," admonished Lee, "till them rattlers are killed. Some of you kids 'll get bit, fust thing you know." But he was talking to a cloud of dust.

The clopity-clopity of the pony's hoofbeats gradually gave place to the sound of pool-balls clicking and whole-hearted laughter—that and the low drone of Gus Stovey's voice as he "took down" a telegram relayed over the 'phone by the Western Union operator at Marfa. The exclamations with which Gus punctuated the transcribing proved this was no ordinary message. Barely waiting long enough to verify its correctness, Gus grabbed it up, flung from his chair and dashed out of the door:

"Hey, Lee! Steve Bowdry killed a man up in New Mexico an' 's headed this way! Here's a telegram jest come." Gus thrust the message into the sheriff's hand.

Lee had been watching the pony and its rider, a regretful light in his eyes. What a pity little Davy's withered limb could not be strengthened, was the burden of his thoughts. But Gus's pretelegraphic information swept Davy out of mind for the time. He glanced at the telegram.

SHERIFF LEE POWELL,

Ft. Davis, via Marfa, Texas.

Steve Bowdry killed Marcus Hanson prominent sheepman last night on Little Penasco stop he crossed stateline three hours ahead of my posse secured fresh horse Delaware Creek last report headed your way stop will probably make dash for Rio Grande between Ft. Davis and Valentine stop I hear you never shoot to get your man but you will have to deliver Bowdry in a coffin

(Signed) PAT MASSEY
Sheriff

Outwardly, Lee Powell seemed least concerned over the news.

"I reckon you aim to shoot this time, Lee," observed Tom Farless, the former sheriff, a veiled taunt in his voice.

Lee made no reply, but shouldered his way through the group to his horse at the tie-rack, mounted and rode slowly up the street. This was a matter to talk over with Nancy.

THE sting in Tom Farless's taunt was understood by everybody. A year and some months back Fort Davis woke to the fact that too many killings branded a community with an ubiquitous—so

Preacher Mervin called it—reputation, in common parlance "tough." Up to that time Tom Farless, tall and wiry, of dyspeptic temper and agile trigger-finger, had spent his several terms as sheriff in populating a private graveyard of his own out at Four Mile.

The taxpayers agreed that Tom used commendable economy in curtailing expensive legal proceedings. They had not objected to bloodshed when bloodshed made for law and order. But conditions had changed. The taxpayers, in the main, were men with growing children. Besides, Fort Davis had become a popular summer resort. Naturally, the business element considered the dampening effect a fortnightly killing had on this lucrative and somewhat timid trade. Tom Farless was duly admonished to be less hasty in judging a hand-to-hip movement—his victim might be reaching for a handkerchief. But it was ever difficult to teach an old dog new tricks. When a stranger answering to the general description of a smooth crook wanted at San Antonio rode into town one day, Tom made a move to arrest him. The stranger's hand snapped back to his hip-pocket. The sheriff plugged him. As the man fell, his hand drew forth a leather wallet containing, as later proved, papers of identification—nothing else. Of course, Tom Farless was exonerated. The stranger had made a fool move. But so, in most cases, had Tom Farless shot his man. The patience of Fort Davis was at end. A sheriff less nimble with a gun and more nimble with his head became the crying need.

Material for such a sheriff was scarce. Any one of a dozen old-timers could have filled the order when it came to past records and fast shooting. This new individual must be a paradox as well as a paragon. He must be fast-shooting but never shoot; he must not get killed yet never kill; above all, he must not let his man escape.

Quite a large order to fill in a county eighty-five miles across, with only three hundred souls, not counting Mexicans, to pick from. But Nancy Yates undertook to pick.

Nancy was the schoolma'am, and she possessed qualities which peculiarly fitted her for the task of picking a sheriff. She was like the red bloom of the torch-bush, and just as graceful. Hidden strength lay

in her supple body and, like the torch-bush when imposed upon, she was dangerous. She understood the cow-punchers and their affairs. The same wild impulses were alive and controlled in her own nature. So she had become a minor oracle—a haven in time of storm—to a hundred reckless riders of the hills. This was the girl who picked Lee Powell for sheriff.

She was a "fighting Yates," from up on the Little Penasco, where for three generations the breed had defended the mountain stronghold against the encroachment of civilization. Nancy knew the sight of blood. She had cowered in the dark, with hands clenched helplessly, and listened to the pounding of hoofs as their horses bore away her two brothers' murderers, yip-yapping in triumph. For the Yateses held the cream of the grazing-lands, coveted by the cattle-barons. At that time she was only a child. Through the dragging years, in one guise or another, she had witnessed similar scenes. Then young Steve Bowdry came. His was not a triumphant arrival, although heralded by the crash of guns. He came backward, whirling, to dart from tree to gully, from gully to rock, his right arm swinging helplessly, his left hand holding a six-shooter with which he kept at bay his darting, dodging pursuers. The Yateses were at home that day in full force—a force Steve Bowdry's pursuers did not care to meet. The boy would have dropped at the gate if Nancy's father had not gathered him in his arms in time. Nancy nursed Steve back to health and he left. She forgot all about him in six months.

But Steve Bowdry had elected to walk the straight and narrow. A year later he came back to the Yateses, and the manner of his second coming was quite different from the first. Nancy had been away to school, and proudly displayed a second-grade teacher's certificate from across the state-line in Texas. Bowdry was crushed at the sight of so much education, and he took leave awkwardly. Perhaps he missed his chance. Shortly afterward Nancy secured a position in the Fort Davis school, and again forgot Steve Bowdry.

ON THE pages of Nancy's life, suffering caused by bloodshed was indelibly written. So it was experience which guided her in her choice, and a fierce desire to ban-

ish forever the heartaches of the women who innocently suffered through the old code of violence. That desire had prompted her to teach, and it was a puzzling sight to watch her—the very embodiment of the fighting spirit—exhorting her children to peaceful settlement of disputes. The coming generation, had she her way, would follow the creed of Christ and turn the other cheek.

It was Davy who brought them together. Lee was teaching the little cripple to ride. School had just opened, and Davy told Lee in boyish confidence that "teacher" was the most "beau'ful lady," and when he grew up he allowed he'd marry her. Lee suggested that Davy "treat" his teacher to a ride some afternoon. He, Lee, would furnish the extra horse. To his consternation, Davy acted on the suggestion, and that quickly—so quickly that Lee found himself, the very next afternoon, looking down into laughing dark eyes which made him hot and cold by turns.

There was no period of friendship between them. Love swept them off their feet. Nancy saw in Lee those qualities she had never known in the men of the Little Penasco. Lee lacked their hardness, perhaps, but possessed instead a firmness much more dependable. There was no sign of desperate bravery, but his eyes shone with purposeful courage. He appeared ungainly, slow of motion; but Nancy later saw him manhandle a horse—a man-killer it was—and never before had she so gloried in strength. She watched with what tenderness he shielded the little cripple, and knew that strong and deep flowed the love of life and a regard for the lives of others.

Quietly—so quietly and adroitly managed it was never known she made the first suggestion—Nancy started the Lee-Powell-for-sheriff boom. The women did the rest. Lee protested in half panic. Nancy caught him by the lapels of his buckskin jumper.

"Lee," she said, her eyes flaring with the light of battle, "if you aren't the next sheriff, I sha'n't marry you!"

That settled it.

Tom Farless was the only man in the county who took Lee's campaign as a joke. He howled in derision at the idea of a sheriff who pledged his word he would uphold the law without resorting to gun-play. Tom's wife, naturally, was loyal

to him. But all the men shook their heads dubiously. They wanted a change; besides, their wives were working on them—and wives are mighty powers when they set their heads. One cool November morning Tom Farless woke to discover that in the future he would be spoken of as the "former sheriff."

Tom Farless resented this, and secretly he hoped and watched and prayed for the right man to come along—the man who would take a fall out of the young upstart and show the voters what fools they were. Could all the bad 'uns be dead? Tom questioned himself the first month of Lee's reign. Nothing but a drunken Mexican hove in sight to make the new sheriff earn his salary. Then Tom's despairing question began to be answered—began, because for the next six months Lee was kept on the jump.

It seemed as if every outlaw from the Rio Grande to the Staked Plains had got wind of the non-shooting sheriff. Open season on sheriffs was declared, and the bad 'uns headed for Jeff Davis County. But they had not figured on Nancy Yates. What she did not already know about strategem and outlaws, she and Lee learned that winter—and without a single funeral. Lee earned enough rewards to pay down on eight sections up Limpia Cañon before the tide set the other way.

Mighty little consolation Tom Farless got out of the answer to his question beyond an invitation to Nancy and Lee's wedding.

Of their wedding-trip to the Little Penasco, neither Nancy nor Lee said much. Only, there were shadows beneath Nancy's lambent eyes, and Lee's mouth had a sterner set to it when they got back. But Fort Davis had ways of learning things. It seemed Lee had knocked down a fellow who had picked a quarrel with him. Friends had intervened before the disgruntled one unlimbered his gun, and Nancy had persuaded Lee to return to Fort Davis. The man Lee knocked down was Steve Bowdry.

LEE sat his horse moodily as the big dun jogged homeward. Plainly the sheriff was worried. There was no misunderstanding between him and Nancy over Steve Bowdry. But Lee had not forgotten the look of undying hatred on Steve's face as he lay prostrate, nor his low-snarled words. To make matters worse, Bowdry's

threat had reached Nancy's ears. It hung like a shadow over them—brought many sleepless nights to Nancy, brought a sterner set to Lee's lips.

If the matter could have remained in the realm of the personal, groaned Lee, they could shoot it out. He glanced at the telegram, from one official to another. "You will have to deliver Bowdry in a coffin." For the first time Lee doubted the wisdom of pledging a bloodless régime. Not that he cared a rap for his promise to the voters—that is, not enough to jeopardize his life foolishly. But it would break Nancy's heart if he failed to make good.

He spurred the big dun into a slow gallop, and the next moment swung off to open the gate. The house sat back a hundred yards from the fence—a red-rock house, roomy and comfortable, with verbenas in front and trellised Virginia creepers finger-tipping to the roof of the shady front porch. Great boulders the size of ordinary dwellings framed an irregular barrier along the fence line, lending an air of privacy to the home.

Lee turned from fastening the gate as his wife came running round a point of rock. She kissed him breathlessly. A quick glance told him she already knew.

"Lee honey," she said, "Gus Stovey just 'phoned a message from Tatem's ranch. Steve Bowdry took a fresh horse and left the one he got at Delaware Creek. That was last night. He's headed toward Rock Pile."

Rock Pile was a ranch twenty miles over the mountains, air-line, northwest. It could mean only one thing: Bowdry would pass through Fort Davis.

Lee put an arm round Nancy's waist and they walked slowly toward the house. A chuckle from him drew Nancy's reproachful eyes.

"You'd most think we were scairt—the way we're actin'," he said.

But Nancy frowned.

"To think," said she bitterly, "we Yateses once saved Steve Bowdry from the Rutherfords—and I nursed him. I wish we'd let him die!"

"Nobody would blame me for shootin' it out with Bowdry," said Lee, canvassing his wife's sentiments.

"But, Lee honey, there must be some other way. If I could see him, talk with him——"

"I won't hide behind no woman's skirts.

I'm sheriff. I've got to take him dead or alive." There was finality in his voice.

"Oh!" she cried. "Isn't there some way—a trick—we've planned before——"

"Yes—there's a way." Nancy glanced up quickly as Lee went on, "I could resign."

She gasped, "Resign!" and pulled away from him. For an instant the awful suspicion took hold of her that Lee had turned craven. For, while Nancy preached the doctrine of peace, she rejoiced in the knowledge that her husband feared no man.

Lee was looking straight ahead with unreadable eyes. But she saw something in his face that recalled vividly the expressions on the faces of her kinsmen on the eve of a killing.

"If I resigned, I'd be free from my promise."

"Yes."

"Well," he drawled, striving for indifference, "Bowdry an' me could—settle our argument."

"You could shoot it out, you mean?"

Lee remained silent. Nancy's blood froze at the thought. She was being crushed by the monster Violence, as she had seen other women crushed. Her heart beat with a passionate, consuming desire to put a stop to the endless tragedies. For that reason she had insisted on Lee's being sheriff. And now it seemed that her good intentions were rushing the man she loved into the very dangers she sought to avert.

"But, Lee—" she pleaded. She paused, and when she spoke again it was in a low, tired voice, as if she saw the uselessness of combating this thing. "All men are alike—they are afraid of what other men might think of them."

Lee listened in dumb astonishment. This was an entirely different person from the Nancy he knew. An uncomfortable feeling possessed him that he was planning a grievous wrong. He tried to soothe her.

"Now, dear, nobody's killed yet."

They had reached the house, where Lee dropped the reins. The big dun strayed over to a luscious spot of green as the master and his wife went inside. Nancy paused on the threshold.

"Lee honey, I want you to promise me something," she said, her arms creeping about his neck. "Promise me you'll not shoot it out with Steve Bowdry."

At that moment the jingle of the tele-

phone-bell caused Lee to spring to the receiver with the expectation of hearing more news of the killer. But he turned to Nancy to nod his promise. It was Doc Hudnett on the wire.

"Lee, come down to little Davy's quick as you can."

"What's happened?"

"Hit the leather!" snapped the doctor's voice.

The receiver at the other end banged into place, and Lee grabbed his belt and six-shooter from the peg where they always hung. Tarrying only long enough to kiss Nancy, he rushed out and sprang into the saddle. Nancy, weeping in the doorway, watched him disappear among the big boulders.

THE dun's hoof-beats grew fainter. Nancy listened until they died out; then she turned indoors. Was this sudden call for Lee a new danger, or did it have to do with Steve Bowdry? Gus Stovey would know. Gus knew everything about everybody. In his capacity as "central," people moved before him as pawns on a chess-board, their actions exposed. Vastly convenient was Gus at times. At other times, when 'phone-talks were of a nature private, he was not so popular.

But Gus was human. Possessed of healthy curiosity himself, he conceded a like amount to others, as attested in this instance by his calling Nancy before she fully arrived at a decision to learn what had happened at Davy's. He was "scooping" a story, but Gus was not aware of it. It was a matter of official pride with him to be the first to spread a bit of news.

Gus had "listened in" when Doc Hudnett talked to Lee—Gus always "listened in" on the doctor, who was a good news-source—and the meagerness in this instance of Doc Hudnett's information was appalling. Summed up, it was "hit the leather" and where to go. What possibilities the doc had let pass! Possibilities, however, which Gus did not purpose seeing wasted; so he "plugged in" on the Powell line. Nancy's response was surprisingly prompt, for she was already in the act of taking down the receiver.

"Did you hear of the accident, Mis' Powell?" came Gus's voice. "About Davy, I mean."

"No. I was just this minute going to call you, Gus."

Then Gus spread himself. There had been quite a number of telephone calls over the matter, and the little operator had every angle down pat. It was just the thing Lee had predicted would happen if the boys went to Espy's *teneja* for a swim. That it should be little Davy seemed a mighty pity, he being crippled already. But it might be best after all, was Gus's consoling suggestion—Gus knew *he* was safe from eavesdroppers—little Davy never would amount to much, while it might have happened to one of the useful lads. No; Davy was not dead yet, but Doc Hudnett said his shrunk-en leg—the crippled one—was swollen to the size of his good one, with the poison slowly mounting toward the heart.

It seemed the boys, on horseback, were climbing the trail at the head of Hospital Cañon when they stumbled onto a den of rattlesnakes. Two or three got safely past and dismounted at the top, while the others swarmed back down the trail and left their horses, all returning to the snakes' den for the purpose of "rocking" them—all but Davy, who, being crippled, remained on his horse near the scene of battle. The rocking took place, and apparently all the rattlesnakes had either been driven into a great cleft of the cañon wall or had been killed. The battle over, the victorious youngsters, still thrilling, swept on a few yards further to Espy's *teneja*. Davy was the last in line. As he urged his pony past the shelving rock, a whir caused him to turn sharply; at that moment the rattler struck. Davy's scream of pain and terror brought the boys running. They arrived in time to see an immense diamond-back, some said six, some said seven feet long, majestically draw his length in slow undulations toward the cleft in the rock.

The older boys tore off Davy's trousers-leg, found the wound and bound a tourniquet above it. Back to town they raced, bearing little Davy with them.

GUS was still talking into Nancy's left ear when her right heard the sound of crunching gravel under a buggy's wheels, and she leaned toward the door the length of the receiver-cord. She gasped. A dumpy, broad back was turned on her as a woman was stepping down from the buggy,

which careened heavily. It was Mrs. Tom Farless. What could the woman want at this inopportune time? Not since Lee had beat the old sheriff had Mrs. Farless set foot in Nancy's house. She turned to the telephone.

"Wait just a moment, Gus—" she began.

"Hold the wire," interrupted Gus. Then silence.

Already Mrs. Farless, sighting Nancy, was entering the door.

As Nancy greeted her unexpected visitor with a perfunctory smile she was reminded of the wedge woodmen use to split asunder fallen trees. Mrs. Farless's nose, fat and tilted and prying, set between two inquisitive eyes, strengthened the resemblance, and Nancy knew her reputation also bore it out. Furthermore, the spiteful things this woman had said about Lee still rankled in Nancy's mind. Good old Lee, who never expressed an unkind thought about any one!

"Jest a minnit, Mis' Powell—" Gus's voice came from far away.

Nancy glanced at her visitor.

"Please be seated," she invited. "I'll be through presently."

Mrs. Farless plumped down in a chair.

"Jest dropped by for a chat," she said. "Come by little Davy's—wasn't it awful? Powerful hard on Lee. I shore know'd better'n to let young Tom go with them boys."

"Hello! Hello, Mis' Powell!" came Gus's voice, this time nearer. "Somebody at the U Up and Down ranch wants to talk to you."

"Why," exclaimed Nancy, "I thought Will Crowell took his family to Marfa this morning! I saw them pass."

"Yes'm. This is a stranger—least, I don't know his voice—Hello! U Up and Down? There you are!"

Mrs. Farless spoke up.

"I heard Lee aimed to quit when his term was up, an' you-all move to that eight sections Lee bought—out'n them rewards." Mrs. Farless never let herself forget that Lee Powell cheated her husband out of a small fortune when he beat him for sheriff.

"Who told you that?" Nancy asked sharply.

"I don't jest recall"—vaguely.

Anything further Mrs. Farless might have said was lost to Nancy in a wave of horror

as she heard a once-familiar voice drawl, "That you, Nancy?"

She smothered an involuntary scream in time, she thought, to hide it from her visitor—and Gus, who, as a matter of course, would be listening. She felt Mrs. Farless's eyes boring into her back, and her imagination picture Gus pressing his head-piece closer to his ear to catch every word. For the voice over the wire belonged to Steve Bowdry. Steve Bowdry, less than an hour's ride from Fort Davis!

She mustered all her courage—the fighting courage of the Yateses.

A repetition of the query came over the wire, this time edged with impatience.

"Yes," she answered sweetly. "I'm so glad you've come. How are the children?"

"Children! Say"—the voice was rough, dumfounded—"do you know who this is?"

"Yes, yes! I have company—Hello! Do you hear me? *I have company!* Mrs. Farless is over—wife of Mr. Tom Farless, the former sheriff." Nancy glanced surreptitiously at her visitor. Mrs. Farless was sitting bolt upright, her face an indignant red. "Oh, can't you hear me?"

Nancy's voice was pleading. She must keep the caller's identity hidden from both Mrs. Farless and Gus. And she must see him, talk with him, persuade him to turn back. The law! What did Nancy Powell care for the law when it came to the life of her husband? She must keep Steve Bowdry from saying anything which could be intelligibly interpreted by her auditors.

"Listen," she went on rapidly; "my horse, with the saddle on, wandered over the mountains a while ago. Please cut through by Espy's *teneja*—do you know it? Hello! . . . Yes. Please catch him for me. I'll walk across and meet you—in Hospital Cañon. . . . What? . . . No; Lee's gone—he—he's away—understand? Gone! . . . I'll be so glad to see you. Please!"

She waited breathlessly for the answer. Presently, as if after deliberating the possibility of a trap, it came.

"All right—but if this is a——"

"A white horse, yes," interrupted Nancy. "Oh, thank you so much! I'll be alone. Good-by!"

She hung up and sank weakly in a chair. She must get rid of this woman, regardless of the price she would later pay in being

gossiped about, baited, perhaps disgraced.

For the eyes, watching, catlike, told Nancy her visitor knew she was making a tryst with a man, alone.

Mrs. Farless's motion of settling more comfortably in her chair resembled that of a cat watching the rat-hole through which the rodent must come. Nancy rightly interpreted the sign. She was scouring her wits for a means to be rid of her, if possible, without ordering her from the house.

"Did you say you wasn't goin' to ranch-in'?" Mrs. Farless questioned.

"No; I didn't say it," said Nancy. "But we aren't."

"Then there ain't no truth in the report Lee's goin' to quit after this term?"

"Mrs. Farless," said Nancy firmly, "Lee's going to run for reelection—if I have anything to say about it." She rose. "I'm sorry to hurry you off, but I've an errand." The courage to say it came from a heart which was throbbing: "You'll be too late! You'll be too late!"

Her visitor came to her feet, trembling with anger, but her voice was controlled.

"Hadn't I better go with you?"

"Good heavens, no!" blurted Nancy. Then she caught her breath in dismay.

Mrs. Farless's lips curved in a sneer and anger rasped her voice.

"Galavantin' round, meetin' strange men—alone—who don't know how their own children be—only, *he* ain't got none. Humph." She waddled toward the door.

With a foot on the buggy-step, Mrs. Farless turned, blind hate in her face as she hissed, "Hussyl!" and clambered into the seat and drove off.

Nancy was half-way across the back lot, sunbonnet in hand, running toward the heights of the Crouching Lion, over which she must climb to reach Hospital Cañon, when Mrs. Farless skewed about in the seat to watch her.

"Up Hospital Cañon, eh?" she muttered. "I'll jest drive around to Hospital Cañon to see what I kin see." She jerked on the reins. "Gad-dup, Dodger!"

HIS MAJESTY, the diamond-back, again had proved he possessed the attributes of a rattlesnake in his prime—a vigor of stroke, a certainty of eye, combined with the cunning of the *bebera vieja*. Yet little Davy was still alive, in a state of

restless coma superinduced by a powerful counter-irritant.

"Drunk," Doc Hudnett explained to Lee, as the big sheriff bent over the boy. "Drunk as a lord. If we can hold back that poison a while longer, we can save him. But the leg must go—it's useless, anyhow. I'm having Dr. Witherspoon over from Marfa."

Davy's mother hovered near, dry-eyed, pale, composed. She had seen Davy suffer so much throughout the years of his childhood that the source of her tears had long since gone dry.

Tom Farless was the only other occupant of the room. The sheriff's eyes were moist when he straightened up. He glanced from Doc to the mother.

"Is there anything I kin do, Mrs. Stone? I'd like mightily to help."

Mrs. Stone smiled wanly.

"It may sound foolish, my sayin' it, but I'd feel better if I know'd that rattlesnake was dead."

"I reckon Davy'd rather I done it," said Lee softly.

"He oughtn't be hard to find," spoke up Doc. "I judge from the wound he's the same rascal that got Espy's black."

Some one outside called Tom Farless, and he tiptoed out.

"I'll get 'em all, to make sure," said Lee starting for the door.

Outside he came upon Tom Farless, grumblingly mounting the buggy-seat beside his wife, who was urging him to hurry. Mrs. Farless had decided it might be safer to have her husband along.

Lee spoke and went on to his horse, swung into the saddle and passed the buggy in a cloud of dust, despite old Dodger's efforts, urged on by Mrs. Tom, to make a race-track out of the main thoroughfare.

"Wonder where Lee Powell's headed for?" asked Mrs. Farless, as Lee took the turn north leading either to New Town or Hospital Cañon. A moment later old Dodger made the same turn, and, ahead, the Farlesses saw Lee rein the big dun round a paw of the Crouching Lion and disappear from view.

"I do believe he's goin' up Hospital Cañon!" exclaimed Mrs. Farless excitedly.

"Sure!" said her husband. "He's goin' up to kill that diamond-back what bit Davy."

"My Gawd, Tom Farless! They's goin' t'be hell a'poppin' up that cañon!"

Then she told her husband what she knew, including some things which were merely personal opinions.

"An' here I am 'thout a gun," said the disgusted ex-sheriff. "Why didn't you tell me in the fust place."

"You don't need no gun!" snapped his better half. "Not if you want to be sheriff agin. That other feller Nancy Powell's goin' to meet is who'll need a gun, I'm thinkin'. Gad-dup, Dodger!"

There was a gate to open just back of the old fort at the entrance of the cañon, which detained Lee a sufficient time for the Farless's buggy to come in sight. He lingered long enough to make sure they meant to pass through, then, following the custom: "Last man through close the gate," he got back in the saddle and rode on.

The drift of his thoughts veered only an instant to wonder what mission could bring the Farlesses to the out-of-the-way cañon, then swung back to the suffering boy.

He had meant to wipe out that den of rattlers, waiting only for the warmth to bring them to life. But one thing or another had intervened to occupy his time. Now it was too late.

BACK in the 'Fifties, when Fort Davis became the most important army post west of San Antonio, the Mescalero Apache braves cut a deep gash diagonally across the Davis Mountains where their horses' hoofs pounded the trail on their way from their haunts in New Mexico to attack the encroaching whites at the post. A little south of the present-day U Up and Down ranch the Indian trail forked. One prong followed down Limpia Cañon. The other rose over the lesser foot-hills of Old Blue, passed along the mesa and dropped abruptly over the back wall into the deceptive quiet of El Cañon de las Viboras Casca-beles—the Cañon of the Snakes with Bells—so called in the *lingua franca* of the old Indian war-trail.

Before dropping down into the cañon, the warriors dismounted to swathe their lower limbs in heavy deerhides, so thick the longest fang could not penetrate, and no horse of value was permitted to wander down into the cañon. Long since, the descendants of these Indians had degenerated into reservation-dwellers; but the descendants of the

snakes with bells still dwelt in their age-old habitation.

In the sight of man—perhaps, too, in the sight of God—being generically a token of Satan, the rattlesnake is damned for all the vices and praised for none of the virtues. Yet virtues he has. He never strikes a foe without a warning—except during the brief season of throwing off his old garments, at which time he is not wholly responsible, being blind and almost helpless, his bells obstructed by the shedding skin; and he never picks a quarrel. Nay; more often he runs away, not in his cowardice but in his wisdom. He possesses the forbearance which comes from the knowledge that his bite is death.

OVER the prong of the Indian trail leading into the menacing quiet of El Cañon de las Viboras Cascabeles—an outlaw, too, in the sight of man and God, possessing a fund of both the vices and virtues granted the rattlesnakes and just as dangerous—rode Steve Bowdry.

Perhaps he was not aware of the resemblance. It is doubtful if he knew he was riding along the old Indian trail. But of one thing there was no doubt: he did not know that between him and the trysting-place with Nancy lay the habitation of the snakes with bells—a barrier past which no human wile could have enticed him, not even the man he came to kill. For Steve Bowdry's heart was filled with a virus of fear, a hounding superstition that some day he would meet the death which spurts from hypo-needed fangs.

It was a dread rooted in a prenatal influence. It had filled his childhood with pitiful terrors, had grown in strength with his growth to manhood—a poison which made weak and vascillating an otherwise noble nature. It was a cancer in his soul. Under cover of reckless bravado it ate away his heart. His was a brand like Cain's. He accepted it without question. Already damned, he had nothing further to lose.

That is why he had fled the law. For Steve Bowdry and one other alone knew he did not kill Marcus Hanson. Nevertheless, if caught, he would hang. Steve's gun had never left the scabbard. But John Hardy had family and position. Moreover, he had befriended Steve, and Steve always paid his

debts. That was it—he always paid. He owed a debt of gratitude to John Hardy; he owed a debt of another nature to Lee Powell. It irked him to be in debt one way or the other. He saw the chance to cancel both obligations at a single stroke.

There was no hesitancy in the manner as he urged his horse forward. The animal was freshly caught from the cavy-yard of saddle-horses at the U Up and Down, having been replaced by the one branded "X" that Steve had obtained at the Rock Pile ranch, which, in turn, had been replaced by the Tatem-ranch saddler. He had been marvelously lucky in not meeting with resistance. One point in his favor—a very important one, too—was that he invariably told some one at each ranch where he would leave the "borrowed" horse. He had found a lone Mexican at the U Up and Down. He was scrupulously careful not to be branded a horse-thief as well as a killer. In the rôle of the latter he had many possible loopholes for escaping the noose; in the former—well, there never was a hung jury over an established case of horse-stealing. The other reason he went his way unmolested was his reputation. It was up to the sheriff, whose business it was to apprehend such characters; and this particular character let the world know—Lee Powell's world—he was willing to meet their sheriff. More, he was seeking him out. He was the "bad 'un" Tom Farless had seen in his dreams.

There was something of the spoiled child about Steve Bowdry. By no stretch of the imagination could he be termed a thinker. Were he asked what effect the death of Lee would have on Nancy, he would have answered with an oath. He simply had not sifted his emotions to the bottom. The old code of violence was his Bible. With him it was a man-to-man proposition, in which a woman and her feelings did not—nay, could not—matter. Lee Powell had robbed him of something precious; then he had knocked him down. Of the two grievances, the latter stood out with the distinctness of the face on Old Blue.

He had agreed to meet Nancy because he was hungry to see her. And, again, her request had poured him full of wild, tingling hopes. He built day-dreams as high as the sky and as thin as mist, through which he was ready to peer for a trap.

Reining his horse to the edge of Espy's

lencia, Steve permitted him to drink, listening for any sounds of a suspicious import. But none reached his alert ears.

With the horse's thirst quenched, Steve guided him to a heavy growth of scrub-oak near the brink of the cañon, a spot screened from prying eyes. Here he dismounted, and with a tie-rope secured his mount to a limb with a knot easily released if occasion rose. Then he slowly skirted the clump of bushes until he reached a spot commanding a view of the trail leading over the Crouching Lion—the way Nancy must come to meet him. Something directly below caught his attention, and he shrank back against the foliage with a muttered oath.

He had rightly interpreted Nancy's tale of the gray horse wandering off. For that matter, it had been just as obvious to Mrs. Farless. What caused Steve to draw back was the sight of a horse just below, grazing in a lesiurely manner, but saddled and bridled. It was a big dun.

If that was the sheriff's horse, Nancy had double-crossed him. The next moment, however, on the trail skirting the rising haunch of the Crouching Lion, he spied her, running with the lightness of a mountain-raised girl. His eyes followed her until she disappeared in the cañon bottom; then he sought out the trail leading over the rim, advancing to meet her. Instead, he came face to face suddenly with Lee Powell, who was slowly and noiselessly climbing up the trail.

REVENGE is fascinating, whether it is secured by the velvety manipulations of Big Business, the hard hand of violence or the strike of a dying rattler. It may be instinctive as well as vindictive.

Just as vindictive but of a lower order than the snake, because human intelligence should devise more worthy means of protection, the thirst for revenge was potent in Mrs. Tom Farless, who at that moment was urging old Dodger up Hospital Cañon at a speed calculated to limber his stiffened joints. Mrs. Farless did the thinking for Farless; he executed the orders. The word "revenge," probably never passed her lips—"gettin' even" was the way she would put it. And when the sweet thought came to her, she did not picture the new sheriff. She saw his wife, instead. It was her daily dream—a heaven-sent calamity which

would snatch the joy out of the eyes of pretty Nancy. For no woman can hate a man as she hates another woman.

Her dream of to-day was: "Suppose that Lee meets Steve Bowdry—an' Bowdry wins—what shall I say to console poor Nancy?" At the thought, her fat face spread with a smile. And on the great day when she should be once more the sheriff's wife! She could not fail now. If Lee killed Steve Bowdry, he stood condemned in the sight of the taxpayers and especially the women who elected him on his non-shooting pledge. If he did not kill Steve Bowdry, the latter would escape. In that contingency Lee would be equally condemned, and Tom Farless would win the next election.

As if this were not victory enough, this golden day Fate had given her a chance to look on at Nancy's bold-faced *liaison* with a strange man. She would be there, and Tom and Lee Powell! A perfect setting for a perfect play! That was Mrs. Tom Farless's idea of revenge.

Each to his way of thinking. Now came the subdued little mother of Davy, who timidly averred she would feel better if she knew the rattler that bit her boy was dead. It was a mere desire for retributive justice—an eye for an eye.

But Mrs. Stone's suggestion roused in Lee Powell a revengeful desire to wipe out the menace—a purpose which took first place in his thoughts, to the utter exclusion of the other danger threatening, until he looked up into the scowling countenance of Steve Bowdry, killer.

The swiftest action is thoughtless action—the undirected reflex of muscles. Their hands darted to the butts of their guns, but there they froze while the two gazed bewildered on one another. A twitch of the finger, and Death would be in the air. But in the mean time gloomy surmises weighed down their minds, made their hands heavy. And the slow seconds went on. They were drenched in sweat. They were shaking with the strain. But the fascination tied them. They could not move. Something stirred on a ledge of rock behind Bowdry; there was a whirring sound, and then a hoarse shout from Lee, a jerk upward, forward, of his hand.

Steve Bowdry felt the rush of a bullet, heard it "sput-t-t," as though against flesh—and yet he was unharmed! This wonder

lasted while he was unsheathing his gun; it was swept from his mind by the kick of his weapon, its roar, and through the haze of smoke he saw Lee Powell fall.

The shriek of a woman rang out from round the curve of the trail, and as the double echo of the guns beat back at him across the ravine, Nancy darted round the rock and dropped beside her husband, tearing frantically at his shirt, through which a blotch of red was beginning to show, and crying:

"Lee—Lee—honey! O my God!"

Gravel crunched again. A man and a woman appeared on the trail—the man tall and wiry, running easily, the woman puffing. The man bent down over Lee, scooped up his fallen gun and fired before Steve could dodge out of view. He felt a crashing blow above the waist. He could not return the fire for fear of hitting one of the women, and he was no woman-killer. With his gun ready in case of pursuit, he backed round the rock. Footfalls hurried after him. Then a woman called sharply:

"You, Tom; don't be a fool! He's hit. Git a posse!"

The pursuer halted, and Steve staggered up the trail toward his horse.

LEE POWELL lay in his own bed, made comfortable as his throbbing wound permitted in view of a shattered collar-bone and the probing incidental to removing the deeply embedded bullet from Steve Bowdry's gun. Dr. Witherspoon hovered over him in a lingering inspection before he joined Dr. Hudnett, who already had gathered up the spread of surgical instruments and stood waiting at the door.

Nancy sat by Lee's side, composed now that she knew her husband would live. She rose as Dr. Witherspoon straightened up.

"He'll be all right now, Mrs. Powell," he assured her. "Just keep him quiet, and don't hesitate to call either Dr. Hudnett or me if he gets too restless."

Nancy thanked him. She bethought herself of little Davy.

"And Davy—will he recover?" she asked.

Dr. Witherspoon hesitated.

"We think—hope—so. The next hour will probably develop something more definite. By the way, if your husband should toss about—he will be feverish for a time—see that he does not loosen the bandage. It

might start the wound to bleeding, and he's already lost more blood than is good for him." With that parting injunction the doctor bowed himself out.

It was growing dusk, and Nancy called the Mexican servant to light a lamp.

"And, Ortiza," she added, as the girl was leaving the room, "you sleep here to-night. I might need you."

"*Si señora*," replied the girl, but there was a frightened look in her eyes.

Of course Nancy knew that later she would have company. It so happened Lee was brought in about the time suppers were in preparation, and while these had been left burning on the stoves, the neighbors hurried to the Powells' to offer their services. Nancy sent them home after she had arranged with several of her more intimate friends to return later.

Mrs. Tom Farless was not among that number, however. She could not refuse to bring Lee home in her buggy, since Tom rode Lee's big dun to gather a posse. But Mrs. Tom was fairly bursting with news, and it was news which, to Gus Stovey's disgust, she did not impart over the telephone but busily spread from house to house. Old Dodger earned his oats before being freed from the harness this night.

All Mrs. Farless's harangues led to one climax, and she put over her point with telling effect. Lee Powell had failed to make good when it came to tackling a real bad 'un—the others, according to Mrs. Tom, were sheep who would stumble blindly into any trap. But Steve Bowdry was the real thing—and Lee had shot first—and missed. But her Tom had not missed! And she confidently expressed the opinion that he would land Steve Bowdry in jail before the night wore through. Now, if Lee Powell had captured the outlaw, she would not have had a word to say, explained Mrs. Farless. He was a nice-enough boy, but— Then she pounced on Nancy with a series of not too dainty insinuations about her assignation with Bowdry. In conclusion, Mrs. Tom switched the subject back to the sheriff issue.

Meantime, Tom Farless was making frantic efforts to prevent Steve Bowdry from reaching the Rio Grande. As Steve disappeared up the trail, wounded, Tom figured he would flee through the Grierson ranch and strike for Piasano Pass, dodge María,

the next county-seat, follow Alamito Creek and hit for the river below Presidio del Norte—either that or strike southwest, pass Capote Mountain, drop over the Rim Rock somewhere about Candelaria. One or the other trails would require two days for its accomplishment—two days of stiff riding. Tom Farless was ignorant of the severity of Steve Bowdry's wound, but he knew the ride stretching before the outlaw required the strength of a well man. Still, that knowledge afforded him slight comfort, for the honor of capturing Bowdry would belong to officers along the border.

The ex-sheriff ached with eagerness. Lee Powell had gone down before Steve. If he, Tom Farless, could capture Bowdry, it would prove his superiority at a stroke and reestablish him as sheriff at the coming election.

The ex-sheriff had enlisted the aid of every man in town with the exception of Gus Stovey. Spread out, fan-shape, north, west and south, the posse had every means of egress blocked save only, of course, the one to the east that led down Hospital Cañon into Fort Davis. But that was the way Steve Bowdry elected to ride when he mounted his horse above the rim. His work was yet unfinished.

AS BOWDRY backed to safety, he caught a glimpse of the ledge beside which he had stood. He saw lying there a huge rattler, writhing sluggishly. A blotch of dull red, almost the color of the russet brown within the diamonds, stained the body, and the smooth surface of the rock was spattered with blood where the reptile had thrashed about. For the first time in his life Steve Bowdry looked upon a rattlesnake without a shudder, and the realization that he was no longer afraid flowed like wine through his veins—even caused him to forget the pain of his wound.

Then, in his retreat to his horse, he remembered he had heard Lee's bullet strike flesh. And now the truth came sickeningly home to Steve. The sheriff had deliberately killed the rattler, even as it prepared to strike, knowing full well that he invited a return fire from Steve's gun before any explanation could be given.

From a high place he saw them carry Lee down the trail and lift him into the buggy. The two women got in beside him,

Nancy holding him, the other woman driving, while the man mounted the big dun and galloped ahead. From a movement of Lee's head Steve had known he was alive.

After that, Steve's attention was called to himself by a growing weakness. He glanced down at a tiny trickle of blood seeping through his woolen shirt. He grimaced with pain. An examination showed the bullet had torn through his body a little to one side and below the heart.

He got out his knife and with difficulty slashed a broad strip lengthwise from the woolen shirt. This he folded, also lengthwise, and bound round his waist, despite the gasps the action called forth, drawing the bandage tight-fitting as a corset and securing it in place with a four-inch thorn from a honca bush. It put a stop to the flow of blood, halted the weakness, but nothing could stop the terrible pain.

Already it required an effort to keep his head clear. He cursed Lee Powell for playing the fool, for saving him from the fangs of the diamond-back, for robbing him of his revenge by placing him under obligation. He cursed the diamond-back, too, for being on that ledge. And, to complete the measure, he cursed Tom Farless for not coming up the trail like a man.

The paroxysm of cursing left him breathless, and he must conserve his strength. Steve Bowdry knew he was a dying man. How he knew it was from a whisper in his heart, a terrible pain in his entrails. He had seen other men die. He had seen them die on their feet, every muscle functioning through sheer exertion of will. He once saw a man mortally wounded, dying thus, take deliberate aim and with the last mustering of will shoot down his own slayer. Of like stuff Steve Bowdry was made. He, too, had an unfinished mission, an old account to square. He must be on his way.

He untied his horse and led him into the clearing. The sound of dried leaves rustling smote upon his ears; but it did not deceive him this time, and he grimaced—as near to a grin as his torture-stiffened lips could frame. He would play a joke on the damned reptiles. He would give them a farewell surprise.

Leading his horse down the trail to the jutting ledge, Steve tied him securely and crawled over on the flat rock. Half a dozen rattlers whirled in unison, as if already in a

fury over the fate of his Majesty. Steve chuckled hoarsely. With a burst of old-time speed he flashed his gun and set the echoes booming down the cañon. Three out of the six serpents writhed and whipped their headless bodies against the rocks. The gun snapped on the sixth, and Steve remembered he had only five shots left after shooting Lee Powell. It was too late to reload as the remaining rattler sought safety in the cleft.

Doing this thing gave Steve immense satisfaction. Had it not been for the never-ceasing pain, he would have felt positively happy. He walked over to the rattler Lee had shot. It lay ominously quiet—there were many things about a rattlesnake unguessed by Steve Bowdry. In a sudden rage he stooped over, meaning to gather it up and fling it down the cañon. But the spark of life was not yet extinct. His Majesty's head shot upward; the mouth flew open and the inch-long fangs sank into the palm of the reaching hand.

With an oath, Steve jerked free. For an instant dumb panic seized him, even his wound was forgotten; then, with the snarl of a fighting dog, he snatched up the diamond-back and twisted the head until the bones snapped. He flung it on the ledge and staggered back to his horse, sucking the poison from his hand as he went.

Once in the saddle and headed down the cañon, the irony of it struck him—or perhaps it was his distorted brain. His mocking laughter rang out, beat against the rocky walls and came back to him in derisive echoes.

GUS STOVEY was tired as he drew a chair under the brass swinging lamp, climbed upon it and went through the business of lighting-up. It had been a long, hard day, what with exciting news and more exciting happenings. Now stretching before him was an all-night vigil. Gus ate, slept and worked in the same quarters—he ate between calls, and he stole his forty winks when he could. Ordinarily this was no hardship, as by ten o'clock all lights were out in Fort Davis—except when there was a dance at the court-house or somebody sick—nine o'clock Sunday nights.

He paused in the act of blowing out the match to listen to the sound of a horse's hoofs outside his door.

"One of the posse," he muttered. Then he listened more intently. "Must be about all in, whoever it is," he said aloud.

For the horse was walking, the clomp of his hoofs striking the gravel with slow regularity. Then it ceased altogether, and Gus heard the creak of leather as some one swung from the saddle, heard the jingle of spurs, footsteps, and something in the sound—an irregularity, a wavering as of a drunken man—sent a chill of apprehension through him.

He got down hastily from the chair and moved over to the counter across which he transacted business with the public. Beneath the counter reposed his gun.

The door opened to admit a stranger who moved with great difficulty, his lips so hard-set they made a white line across a face turned sickly yellow. But the beady eyes were active. Gus felt their gaze like a knife-thrust. He fought for calmness.

"Evenin', stranger," he said, his hand groping for the gun.

"Bring them hands up empty—quick!" commanded his visitor. "I'm Steve Bowdry."

That name jerked the hands of Gus aloft.

"Where does Lee Powell live? Quick!"

The words came with a gasp, and Gus saw the crimson stain on the shirt-front, which he understood; and he saw the right hand swollen to twice its normal size, which he did not understand. With teeth chattering, Gus gave him the information.

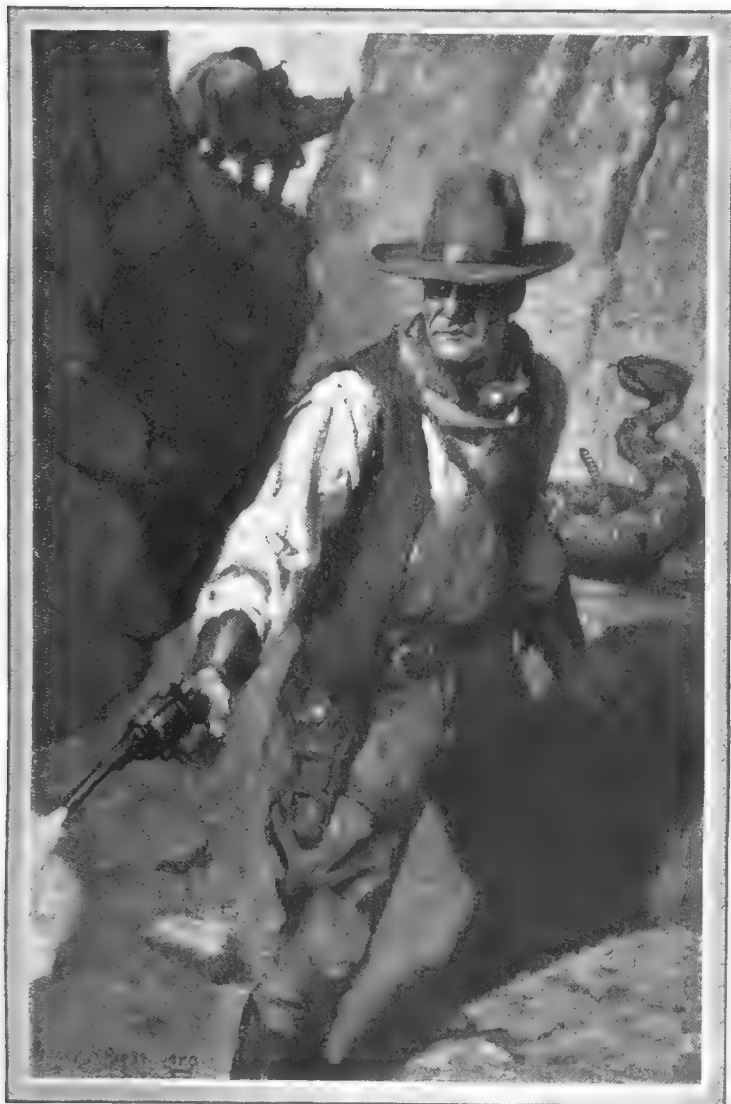
"Who's in his house?"

It was impossible for Gus to lie; his brain was benumbed.

"Mis' Powell, I think—an' maybe a Mexican girl," he quavered. "I kin 'phone an' make sure"—hopefully.

"You kin," said Steve. "Tell Mrs. Powell you are hurt—sick—dying—hell!—anything that'll get her down here—quick! An' don't press no buttons nor nothin', or you *will* be dyin' shore enough."

"If not dead," thought Gus, as he sat down at the switchboard. But the little operator's head was now working. He fumbled with the connection until the outlaw grew suspicious and threatened him again. He had gained sufficient time, nevertheless, to formulate a plan. For himself he felt no great uneasiness so long as he did this maniac's bidding. But to place



Steve Bowdry felt the rush of a bullet, heard it "sput-t-t," as though against flesh — and yet he was unharmed! This wonder was swept from his mind by the kick of his weapon, its roar.

Nancy Powell in his power! That was what he thought; what he said was:

"See here, partner; why not let me tell her she's wanted at little Davy's—he's expected to die most any time—an' she'd believe that. I kin direct you there, too, if you want—an' I'll keep mum——"

"Sure you will! I'm goin' to attend to you before I leave—" Steve was halted by a seizure of coughing that left him red-lipped. He fought it down and hurried on. "Quit stallin.' I don't care a damn where she goes, jest so she leaves the house. I've got business with Lee Powell, an' I don't want no interference. Get busy! I ain't got all night." The voice was shaky, but the gun never wavered as it drove Gus back to his task.

Nancy's friends had not arrived when Gus Stovey 'phoned her that she was needed at little Davy's. For a moment she was in a quandary, but only for a moment. When they brought Lee home, Mrs. Stone insisted on both doctors leaving Davy long enough to care for Lee. Lee was now resting comfortably, breathing regularly—and Ortiza could call her if he became restless. The least Nancy could do was to return Mrs. Stone's kindness. So she called the Mexican girl and gave her a few simple instructions, mainly to call her if she grew frightened or if Lee showed signs of restlessness. Then she departed for Davy's.

The Powell home was at the far-west end of the town, a thinly settled section with each house sitting back in a roomy yard several acres in extent. Midway between Nancy's and the telephone office was the Stone home. It never occurred to Nancy to be uneasy, for neighbors visited back and forth after dusk without fear of molestation. On this occasion Nancy's thoughts were of Davy as she hurried along, and not until she had reached the Stone gate did she hear a horse's hoofs as some one approached from the direction of the business part of town.

Nancy paused for a moment. It was undoubtedly one of the posse returning with news. She saw the horse and rider loom black in the starlight, and she hesitated. But, she decided, Gus Stovey would 'phone the news, if news there was; and she turned into the gate, hidden in the shadows of two giant chinaberry trees, just as Steve Bowdry swept past, clinging to the saddle-

horn with the last of his flagging will.

Nancy was admitted by Mrs. Stone herself. Even in the dim light her face wore a look of peace, of happiness that transfigured her.

"It's so nice of you to come," said Davy's mother. "I didn't expect it, dear, knowin' Lee's condition."

Nancy gasped.

"Why, Mrs. Stone, I came because you sent for me!"

"I? Sent for you?" Mrs. Stone smiled. Nancy had never seen her look so young. "My dear, I'm glad you're here—but I didn't send for you—but, oh, have you heard about Davy?"

"Davy, yes. How is he? Is he so low?" Nancy was prepared to see the light die from the mother's eyes. To her surprise, it brightened.

"Oh, no! He's goin' to git well! Nancy"—Mrs. Stone grabbed her in her arms, tears of joy springing to her eyes—"Dr. Wither-spoon says he kin cure Davy's crippled limb—positively! It's something that rattlesnake's bite done to it. I don't just know—but I do know God is good, oh, so good to me!"

Nancy returned the embrace, happy, too, but puzzled. Was it one of Gus's jokes? He wanted to surprise her no doubt. But—Nancy frowned, her thoughts flying back to Lee, who might that moment be needing her—rather a poor time for a joke. The more she thought about it the angrier she became. She would tell Gus about it—right now! It would make him more careful in the future.

Nancy ran to the telephone, an old-fashioned long-box affair, one of the kind operated by ringing the bell to get central. She rang and took down the receiver. No answer. She rang again, more insistently, longer. But central was silent.

TOM FARLESS rode at the head of his posse, homeward bound. He drooped wearily in the saddle. There was no conversation, just a silence eloquent with disappointment. Forty miles of hard riding and nothing to show for it! At the very last Tom and several others had scoured the breaks and rocks of Hospital Cañon, in the dim hope that Steve Bowdry had crawled off somewhere and either died or lay disabled. Beyond a number of dead

rattlesnakes they found nothing. He had made a clean getaway.

The ex-sheriff was most disgusted of all. He had missed his chance when he obeyed his wife's summons. If he had only followed Bowdry and shot it out! But, even as things were, he had a fifty-fifty break with Lee Powell next election. Neither had caught his man; but Tom Farless had shot him—with Lee's own gun, too!

THE troop of horsemen rode slowly, one or the other shifting position to ease tired muscles. There was no hurry—time a-plenty to tell how it happened a lone fugitive, wounded at that, wriggled through a cordon drawn so tight a jack-rabbit could not penetrate.

It took that fugitive a like measure of time to open the Powell gate, which he did without dismounting—a trick familiar to every cowboy—and ride up to the house that it took the posse to enter town, pass the old schoolhouse and swing into the main street. Here Tom Farless drew rein and turned in the saddle.

"Well, boys," he said, "I reckon you-all kin go home. I'll drift past the 'phone office an' send a message to Marfa and Alpine to be on the lookout. Maybe they'll nab him." But the tones of his voice expressed hope they would not.

Here and there a horseman dropped out, turned into a side-street or rode westward in the direction of Lee Powell's. But a dozen went on with the ex-sheriff toward their homes scattered down the valley. A desultory conversation sprang up. Said Barney Good:

"Martha's goin' to set up the fore part of the night with Nancy—guess she'll be ready by the time I git home. Dog-gone it, I wish't we'd caught that bird for Lee's sake."

"Huh!" grunted Will Cheshire, an adherent of the ex-sheriff. "If Tom had set eyes on him, we would."

"Aw, hell!" said Barney, low-voiced. "If Lee Powell couldn't take him, nobody could. I tell yeh there's something snaky about the whole business. I was with Tom when we was lookin' for Bowdry—up Hospital Cañon. Tom showed us where each man stood. Why, Lee could 'ave shut both eyes an' hit a man!"

"Jest the same, he missed," returned Will.

"I hear Tom's goin' to run against Lee next election. He wouldn't have a look-in if Lee'd took Steve Bowdry."

"Sure thing!" agreed Will. "But he ain't took him yet—an' he ain't apt to."

"What you fellers arguyin' about?" spoke up Tom Farless, although he had heard every word. He suddenly jerked in his reins. "What's that?" he exclaimed sharply.

They were within a hundred yards of the telephone office, and in the stillness following Tom's exclamation came the sounds of muffled cries mingling with heavy thuds from the direction of Gus Stovey's.

Tom Farless raked his mount with the spurs; the others followed suit, and they dashed up to the office like a cavalry charge. Farless was off his horse before it stopped. He sprang through the door.

The muffled sounds came from the booth outside the counter. The door was solid wood, heavy enough for a vault, almost—in fact, had come from an old army-post building—but the combined weight of half a dozen men smashed it in. There lay Gus Stovey, bound.

He spluttered incoherently for a moment when they freed him. It was a crucial situation with Gus. Any one who knew his predilection for dramatic story-telling could appreciate that. Here was the big moment of a lifetime. He possessed astounding information—he alone. The actions, perhaps the lives of these men gathered round him depended upon how they received his story. Never before had Gus felt so much like spreading himself. He had felt utterly disgusted at the abrupt, the terribly wasteful manner in which Doc Hudnett communicated with Lee Powell that morning when he had such a wonderful opportunity to create a thrill. And now he, Gus Stovey, possessed information vastly more dramatic. From the moment Steve Bowdry entered the 'phone office until he had left him, gasping and kicking, in the booth, thrill followed thrill, not pleasant at the time, but now—Gus's eyes, still bulging, swept the tense, questioning faces. He did not know it, but he was smeared with blood—Steve Bowdry's blood. He cleared his throat convulsively, preparatory to fairly raising the roof. Then a surge of hysteria swept over him, upsetting all notions of a detailed recountal, and he blurted out:

"Steve Bowdry's at Lee's! He's goin' to kill him!"

That was sufficient. Had Gus known it, it was the most dramatic story he had ever told. The posse jammed the door. But Tom Farless was the first man through, and he made a flying leap for his horse.

"Stand by me, men, an' we'll catch him!" he yelled, as he swept to the head of the riders. Up the street thundered the posse, gathering recruits on the way.

IT WAS a very confident ex-sheriff who rode at the head of the racing horsemen. His opportunity had come. Only in a dim, unemotional way did he think of Lee Powell's possible death at the hands of the revengeful outlaw. He only knew that the arrest would clinch the office beyond all doubt. Tom laid his plans carefully as he rode. First, of course, it would be necessary to search the house as a matter of precaution. Finding nothing, he would begin a drive over the hills, starting from Lee's house, the reverse from closing in on a man. Once located, if Steve Bowdry had any fight left in him, Tom Farless was the man—The ex-sheriff's thoughts jerked back to the present as his horse swerved to avoid running down the dark figure of a woman who shrank aside just in time. It was Nancy Powell. Tom reined up.

"Hey, Barney! Help Mrs. Powell up behind you—an' tell her," he called, then rode on. He did not mean to be burdened with a woman when he battled Steve Bowdry this time.

On the way up past the dark blotch of Preacher Mervin's apple orchard, a frightened Mexican girl ran out at them.

"Queek—queek!" she cried. "The telefona no work! Señor Lee—"

They were out of hearing before she could finish. Why wait to hear her story—a story they already knew?

The gate at Lee's stood open. No one paused to "cut f'r signs." Round the big boulder the house came to view, and a lighted window blinked at them vacantly. It was the window of the room in which Nancy had left Lee. A horse snorted on their approach to the house, and the jingle of iron stirrups striking against low bushes as he trotted off came to their straining ears.

They slowed down to ascertain which way the riderless animal ran—they knew

he was riderless because of the flap-flap of saddle-leather which carried no weight.

Tom Farless spoke in low tones, and half a dozen riders separated from the main body in groups of twos and rode off into the night. Steve Bowdry was somewhere in the vicinity, probably still in the house. Such was the information conveyed by the riderless horse.

The remainder of the posse dismounted. At a command from Farless, all moved to encircle the house except Barney Good and Will Cheshire, who followed the ex-sheriff, with Nancy close by, up the front porch and into the hall.

With her hand staying her fluttering heart, Nancy leaned against the wall while Tom Farless noiselessly turned the knob and opened the door. He sprang inside, his gun leveled, Nancy at his side.

What they saw there brought an oath from Tom Farless as he saw the end of his dream.

The room was undisturbed except in the immediate vicinity of the bed. On the floor beneath it, on Lee's side, a pool of blood was slowly forming from a steady drip, drip, drip above. The bandage about Lee's wound was disarranged. In his left hand he held a six-shooter—Steve Bowdry's—and he held it in the manner he would receive a surrendered gun. Later—and forever a mystery to Fort Davis—six exploded cartridges were found in its chambers. Lee's other hand was clasped by that of Steve Bowdry, plain to see in a token of belated understanding. Steve was stone-dead. There was a touch of delirium in Lee's eyes, not to be wondered at considering what he had just gone through; but his voice was steady when he spoke, saying:

"Steve's last words were for you, Nancy. He said to tell you he had paid his debts—to you—to me—to John Hardy. He shore hated to owe anybody—so he surrendered to me."

Lee's lips parted in a drowsy smile. A smile perhaps because, as usual, he had got his man without firing a shot; his pledge remained unbroken.

On a gray ledge jutting from the back wall of Hospital Cañon, in a spot made bright by the starlight, lay the still form of his Majesty, and by his side, somberly beautiful, his queen mourned her dead.

A Fine Day

Jeremy Is One of the Eternal Boys, Like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. You Will Want to Make or Renew His Acquaintance

By Hugh Walpole

IT WAS a fine day. Jeremy, waking and turning over in his bed, could see beyond and above Stokesley's slumbering form a thin strip of pale-blue sky gleaming like a sudden revelation of water behind folds of amber mist. It would be a real thumping autumn day, and he was to play half for the first fifteen against the rest that afternoon. He also had three hundred lines to do for the French master that he had not even begun, and it must be handed up, completed, at exactly eleven-thirty that same morning. He had also every chance of swapping a silver frame containing a photograph of his Aunt Amy with Phipps, minor for a silver pencil, and he was to have half Raseley's sausage for breakfast in return for mathematical favors done for him on the preceding day.

As he thought of all these various things, he rolled round like a kitten in his bed, curling up, as it was his pleasantest habit, into a ball, so that his toes nearly met his forehead and he was one exquisite lump of warmth. Rending through this came the harsh sound of the first bell, murmurs from other rooms, patterings down the passage, and then suddenly both Stokesley and Raikes sitting up in bed simultaneously, yawning and looking like bewildered owls.

In precisely five minutes the three boys were washed, dressed and down, herding with the rest in the long cold classroom, waiting for call-over. When they had answered their names they slipped across the misty playground into chapel and sat there, like all their companions, in a confused state of half sleep, half wakefulness, responding, as it were, in a dream, screaming out the

hymn, and then all shuffling off to breakfast again, like shadows in a Japanese pageant.

It was not, in fact, until the first five minutes at breakfast, when Raseley strongly resisted the appeal for half his sausage, that Jeremy woke to the full labors of the day. Raseley was sitting almost opposite to him, and he had a very nice sausage—large and fat and properly cracked in the middle. Jeremy's sausage was a very small one.

"I didn't," protested Raseley. "I said you could have half a sausage if you did the sums, and you only did two and a half."

"I did them all," said Jeremy stoutly. "It wasn't my fault that that beastly fraction one was wrong. I only said I'd do them. I never said I'd do them right."

"Well, you can jolly well come and fetch it," said Raseley, pursuing in the circumstances the wisest plan, which was to eat his sausage as fast as he could.

"All right," said Jeremy indifferently. "You know what you'll get afterward if you don't do what you said." And this was bold of Jeremy, because he was smaller than Raseley; but he was learning already whom he might threaten and whom he might not, and he knew that Raseley was as terrified of physical pain as Aunt Amy was of a cow in a field. With very bad grace Raseley pushed the smallest half of the sausage across, and Jeremy felt that his day was well begun.

He did not know why, but he was sure that this would be a splendid day. There are days when you feel that you are under a special care of the gods and that they are arranging everything for you—background, incident, crisis, and sleep at the end in a

most delightful, generous fashion. Nothing would go wrong to-day.

ON THE whole, human beings are divided into the two classes of those who realize when they may step out and challenge life and those to whom one occasion is very much the same as another.

Jeremy, even when he was eight years old and had sat in his sister Helen's chair on his birthday morning, had always realized when to step out. He was going to step out now.

The insufferable Baltimore, who was a wonderful cricketer and therefore rose to great glories in the summer term, but was no footballer at all and equally, therefore, was less than the dust in the autumn, came with his watery eyes and froggy complexion to ask Jeremy to lend him twopence. Jeremy had at that moment threepence, but there were a number of things that he intended to do with it. Because he detested Baltimore, he lent him his twopence with the air of Queen Elizabeth accepting Sir Walter Raleigh's cloak and got exquisite pleasure from doing so. All these little things, therefore, combined to put him in the best of spirits when, at half-past eleven, Monsieur Clemenceau (not then a name known the wide world over) requested Monsieur Cole to be kind enough to allow him to peruse the three hundred lines which should have been done several days before.

Jeremy wore the cloak of innocence, sitting in the back row of the French class.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "Did you say three hundred lines?"

"That is that exact amount," said Monsieur Clemenceau, "that I require from you *immédiatement*."

"I beg your pardon," said Jeremy politely.

"I need not repeat," said Monsieur Clemenceau. "Three hundred lines by you at once for impertinence three days previous."

"Why, sir, surely," said Jeremy, "you told me that I need not do them this term, because——"

"No 'because,'" interrupted Monsieur Clemenceau, at the top of a rather squeaky voice. "There is no 'because.'"

"But, sir," began Jeremy, and from all sides of the class there broke out:

"Why, certainly, sir; don't you remem-

ber—" and "Cole is quite right, sir, you said—" and "I think you've forgotten, sir, that—" and "It really wouldn't be fair, sir, if—" A babel rose. As the boys very well knew, Monsieur Clemenceau had a horror of too much noise because Thompson was holding a class in the next room, and on two occasions that very term had sent a boy in to request that, if it were possible, Monsieur Clemenceau should conduct his work a little more softly. And this had been agony for Monsieur Clemenceau's proud French spirit.

"I will have silence!" he shrieked. "This is no one's business but mine and the young Cole's. Let no one speak until I tell them to do so. Now, Cole, where are the three hundred lines?"

There was a complete silence.

"Will you speak or will you not speak?" Monsieur Clemenceau cried.

"Do you mean me, sir?" asked Jeremy very innocently.

"Of course I mean you!"

"You said, sir, that no one was to speak until you told them to."

"Well, I tell you now."

Jeremy looked very injured.

"I didn't understand," he said. "If I could explain to you quietly——"

"Well, you shall explain afterward," said Monsieur Clemenceau, and Jeremy knew that he was saved, because he could deal *à deux* with Monsieur Clemenceau by appealing to his French heart, his sense of honor and a number of other things, and might even, with good fortune, extract an invitation to tea when Monsieur Clemenceau, in his very cozy room, had a large supply of muffins.

Coming out of school at half-past twelve, he found, to his exquisite delight, that there was a letter for him. He was, of course, far from that grown-up attitude of terror and misgiving at the sight of the daily post. Not for him yet were bills and unwelcome reminiscence, broken promises and half-veiled threats. He received from his mother one letter a week, from his father perhaps three a term, and from his sister Mary an occasional confused scribbling that, like her stories, introduced so many characters one after another that the most you obtained from them was a sense of life and of people passing and of Mary's warm and emotional heart. Once and again

he had a letter from Uncle Samuel, and these were the real glories. It was natural that on this day of days there should be such a letter. The very sight of his uncle's handwriting—a thin, spidery one that was in some mysterious way charged with beauty and color—cockled his heart and made him warm all over. He sat in a corner of the playground and read it. It was as follows. It began abruptly, as did all Uncle Samuel's letters.

Your mother has just taken your Aunt Amy to Drymouth on a shopping expedition. The house is so quiet you wouldn't know it. I am painting a very nice picture of two cows in a blue field. The cows are red. If you were here I would put you into the picture as a dog asleep under a tree. Because you aren't here, I have to take that wretched animal of yours and use him instead. He is not nearly as like a dog as you are.

I had two sausages for breakfast because your Aunt Amy is going to be away for two whole days. I generally have only one sausage, and now, just about five o'clock this evening, I shall have indigestion, which will be one more thing I shall owe your Aunt Amy.

The woman came in yesterday and washed the floor of the studio. It looks beastly, but I shall soon make it dirty again, and if only you were here it would get dirty quicker.

There's a rumor that your Uncle Percy is coming back to stay with us again. I am training your dog to bite the sort of trousers that your Uncle Percy wears. I have a pair very like his, and I draw them across the floor very slowly and make noises to your dog like a cat. The plan is very successful, but to-morrow there won't be any trousers and I shall have to think of something else.

Mrs. Sampson asked your mother whether she thought that I would like to paint a portrait of her little girl. I asked your mother how much money Mrs. Sampson would give me for doing so, and your mother asked Mrs. Sampson. Mrs. Sampson said that if she liked it when it was done she'd hang it up in her drawing-room where everybody could see and that that would be such a good advertisement for me that there wouldn't need to be any payment, so I told your mother to tell Mrs. Sampson that I was so busy sweeping a crossing just now that I was afraid I wouldn't have time to paint her daughter.

When I have done these cows, if they turn out really well, perhaps I'll send the best of them to Mrs. Sampson and tell her that that's the best portrait of her daughter I was capable of doing.

Some people in Paris like my pictures very much, and two of them have been hanging in an exhibition and people have to pay to go in and see them. I sold one of them for fifty pounds, and therefore I enclose a little bit of paper which, if you take it to the right person, will help you buy enough sweets to make yourself sick for a whole week. Don't tell your mother I've done this.

Your sister Mary is breaking out into spots. She has five on her forehead. I think it's because she sucks her pencil so hard.

Your sister Barbara tumbled all the way down the stairs yesterday but didn't seem to mind. She is the best of the family, and shortly I intend to invite her into the studio and let her lick my paint-box.

Outside my window at this moment there is an apple tree, and the hills are red, the same color as the apples. Some one is burning leaves, and the smoke turns red as it gets high enough, and then comes white again when it gets near the moon, which is a new one and exactly like one of your Aunt Amy's eyebrows.

I am getting so fat that I think of living in a barrel, as a very famous man, about whom I'll tell you one day, used to do. I think I'll have a barrel with a lid on the top of it, so that when people come into the studio whom I don't want to see, I shall just shut the lid and they won't know I'm there. I think I'll have the barrel painted bright blue.

Your dog thinks there's a rat just behind my book-case. He lies there for hours at a time, purring like a kettle. There may be a rat, but knowing life as well as I do, there never is a rat where you most expect one. That's one of the things your father hasn't learned yet. He is writing his sermon in his study. If he knew there weren't any rats, he wouldn't write so many sermons.

I've been reading a very funny book by a man called France, and the funny thing is that he is also a Frenchman. Isn't that a funny thing? You shall read it one day when you're older and then you'll understand your Uncle Samuel better than you do now.

Well, good-by. I hope you're enjoying yourself and haven't entirely forgotten your

UNCLE.

P. S. I promise you that the lid shall never be on the barrel when you're there, and, if you don't get too fat, there's room for two inside.

JEREMY read the letter through three times before finishing with it; then, sitting forward on the old wooden bench scarred with a thousand penknives, he went over the delicious details of it. How exactly Uncle Samuel realized the things that he would want to know! No one else in the family wrote about anything that was exciting or intriguing. Uncle Samuel managed in some way to make you see things. Jeremy sighed with happy contentment.

Young though he was, he realized that great truth that one person in the world is quite enough—one human being who understands your strange mixture equalizes five million who think you are simply black, white or purple. All you want is to be reassured about your own suspicions of yourself; a devoted dog is almost enough, and one friend ample. Jeremy went into dinner with his head in the air, trailing after him, like Peter Pan, one shadow of the world immediately round him—the world in which

the school sergeant was carving the mutton at the end of the table so ferociously that it might have been the corpse of his dearest enemy, and the masters at the high table were getting fried potatoes and the boys only boiled, and Jeremy wasn't having even those because he'd got to play football in an hour's time—and the other world where there was Aunt Amy's eyebrow high in the air and the cathedral bells ringing and Uncle Samuel painting cows.

Jeremy would have liked to consider the strange way in which these two worlds refused to mingle, to have developed the idea of Uncle Samuel carving the mutton instead of the sergeant, and the sergeant watching the evening sky instead of Uncle Samuel, and why it was that these two things were so impossible. But his attention was occupied by the fact that "Plummy" Smith, who was a fat boy, was sitting in his wrong place and making a "squash" on Jeremy's side of the table, which led quite naturally to the game of trying to squeeze Plummy from both ends of the table into a purple mass, and to do it without Thompson noticing. Little pathetic squeals came from Plummy, who loved his food and saw his mutton mysteriously whisked away onto some other plate and knew that he would be hungry all the afternoon in consequence. He was one of those boys who had on the first day of his arrival, a year earlier, unfortunately confided to those whom he thought his friends that he lived with two aunts, Maria and Alice. His fate was sealed from the moment of that unfortunate confidence. He did not know it, and he had been in puzzled bewilderment ever since as to why the way of life was made so hard for him. He meant no one any harm and could not understand why the lower half of his person should be a constant receptacle for pins of the sharpest kind. The point in this matter about Jeremy was that, as with Miss Jones years before, he could not resist pleasant fun at the expense of the foolish. He had enough of the wild animal in him to enjoy sticking pins into Plummy, to enjoy squeezing the breath out of his fat body, to enjoy seeing him without any mutton, and yet had it been really brought home to him that Plummy was a miserable boy, sick for his aunts, dazed and puzzled, spending his days in an orgy of ink, impositions and physical pain, he would have been

horrified that himself could be such a cad. He was not a cad. It was a fine day; he was in splendid health and spirits; he had had a letter from Uncle Samuel, and so he stuck pins into Plummy.

WHEN the meal was over he walked down to the football ground with Riley and told him about Uncle Samuel. He told Riley everything, and Riley told him everything. He showed Riley the piece of paper that Uncle Samuel had sent him.

"By gosh!" said Riley. "That's a pound."

"It's an awful pity," said Jeremy, "that you are not in the 'baby dorm.' Perhaps you could come in to-night. I'm sure Stokesley and Pug wouldn't mind. We're going to have sardines and marmalade and doughnuts."

"If I get a chance I will," said Riley. "But I don't want to be caught out just now because I've been in two rows already this week. Perhaps you could keep two sardines for me and I'll have them at breakfast to-morrow."

"All right; I'll try," said Jeremy. He looked about and sniffed the air. It was an ideal day for football. It was cold and not too cold. The hills above the football field were veiled in mist. The ground was soft, but not too soft. It ought to be a good game.

"Do you feel all right?" asked Riley.

They proceeded in the accustomed manner to test this. Jeremy hurled himself at Riley, caught him round the middle, tried to twine his legs round Riley's, and they both fell to the ground. They rolled there like two puppies. Jeremy exerted all his strength to bring off what he had never yet succeeded in doing—namely, to turn Riley over and pin his elbows to the ground. Riley wriggled like a fish. Jeremy was very strong to-day, and managed to get one elbow down and was in a very good way toward the other when they heard an awful voice above them:

"And what may this be?"

They scrambled to their feet, flushed and breathless, and there was old Thompson staring at them very gravely in that way that he had so that you couldn't tell whether he were displeased or not.

"We were only wrestling, sir," said Jeremy, panting.

"Excellent thing for your clothes," said Thompson. "What do you suppose the gym is for?"

"It was only a minute, sir," said Riley. "Cole wanted to see whether he was all right."

"And he is?" asked Thompson.

Jeremy perceived that Olympus was smiling.

"I'm a little out of breath," he said; "but of course it's just after dinner. The ground isn't muddy yet."

"You'd better wait until you're in football things," Thompson said. "Then you can roll about as much as you like."

He walked away, rolling a little as he went. The two boys looked after him and suddenly adored him. Their feelings about him were always undergoing lightning changes. At one moment they adored, at another they detested, at another they admired from a distance, and at another they wondered.

"Wasn't that decent of him?" said Riley.

"That's because he's just had his dinner," said Jeremy. "It's his glass of beer. My uncle's just the same."

"Oh, you and your uncle!" said Riley. "I'll race you to the end of the playground."

They ran like hares, and Jeremy led by a second.

JEREMY was in the changing-room when suddenly the atmosphere of the coming game was close about him. He had that strange mixture of fear and excitement, terror and pleasure. He suddenly felt cold in his jersey and shorts, and shivered a little. At the other side of the room was Turnbull, one of the three-quarters playing for the rest, a large, bony boy with projecting knees. The mere thought that he would have, in all probability, to collar Turnbull and bring him to the ground made Jeremy feel sick. His confidence suddenly deserted him. He knew that he was going to play badly—worse than ever in his life before. He wished that he could suddenly develop scarlet fever and be carried off to the infirmary. He even searched his bare legs for spots. He had rather a headache, and his throat felt queer, and he wasn't at all sure that he could see straight. One of those silly fools who always comes and talks to you at the wrong moment sniggered and said he felt awfully fit. It was all right

for *him*; he was one of the forwards playing for the rest. It would be perfectly easy for him to hide himself in the scrum and pretend to be pushing when he wasn't. No one ever noticed, but the isolation of a half was an awful thing to consider, and that desperate moment when you had to go down to the ball with at least five hundred enormous boots all coming at your head at the same moment was horrible to contemplate. Millett, the scrum half playing for the rest and Jeremy's bitterest rival for the place in the fifteen, was looking supremely self-confident. Certainly he was not as good as Jeremy on Jeremy's day; but was this Jeremy's day? No; most certainly it was not.

They went out to the field, and everything was not improved by the fact that a large crowd was gathered behind the ropes to watch them. This was an important game. The big school-match was a fortnight from to-day, and Millett might get his colors on to-day's game quite easily. And then suddenly the feel of the turf under his feet, the long, sweeping distance of the good gray sky above his head, the tang of autumn in the air brought him confidence again. He was not aware that a lady visitor who had come out with Mr. Thompson to watch the game was saying at that moment:

"Why, what a tiny boy! You don't mean to say, Mr. Thompson, that he's going to play with all those big fellows?"

And Thompson said:

"He's the most promising footballer we have in the school. The half-back has to be small, you know."

"Oh, I do hope he won't get hurt," said the lady visitor.

"Won't do him any harm if he is," said Mr. Thompson.

The whistle went and the game began. Almost at once Jeremy was in trouble. Within the first minute the school fifteen were lining out in their own half of the field, and a moment later some of the rest forwards had broken through, dribbled, tried to pass, thrown forward, and there was a scrum with Jeremy's twenty-five. This is the kind of thing to make you show your mettle. To be attacked before you have found your atmosphere, realized the conditions of the day, got your feel of yourself as part of the picture, gained your first win; to have to fight for your team's life with your own goal looming like the gallows just

behind you, and to know that the loss of three of five points in the first few minutes is often a decisive factor in the issue of the battle—all this tests anybody's greatness.

Jeremy, in the first five minutes, was anything but great. He had a consciousness of his own miserable inadequacy—a state not common to him at all. He seemed to be one large cranium spread out balloonwise for the onrush of his enemies. As he darted about at the back of the scrum, waiting for the ball to be thrown in, he felt as though he could not go down to it, and then, of course, the worst possible thing happened—the rest forwards broke through the scrum. He tried to fling himself on the ball and missed it, and they were sliding away past him, making straight for the goal-line. Fortunately, the man with the ball was flung to touch just in time, and there was a breathing-space. Jeremy, nevertheless, was tingling with his mistake as acutely as though a try had been scored. He knew what they were saying on the other side of the rope. He knew that Baltimore, for instance, was winking his bleary eyes with pleasure, that all the friends of his rival half were saying in chorus, "Well, young Cole's no good—I always said so," and that Riley was glaring fiercely about him and challenging any one to say a word.

He knew all this, and, unfortunately, for more than a minute had time to think of it, because one of the school three-quarters got away with the ball and then kicked it to touch, and there was a line-out and a good deal of scrambling before the inevitable

scrum. This time it was for him to throw in the ball, crying in his funny voice, now hoarse, now squeaky, "Coming on the right, School—shove!" They did shove and carried it on with them, and then the rest half got it, threw it to one of his three-quarters, who started racing down the field with only Jeremy in his way before he got to the back. It was that very creature with the bony knees whom Jeremy had watched in the changing-room. The legs wobbled toward him as though with a life of their own. He ran across, threw himself at the knees and missed them. He went sprawling on to the ground, was conscious that he had banged his nose, that somebody near him was calling out, "Butters!" and that his career as a football half was finally and forever

concluded: After that, he could do nothing right. The ball seemed devilishly to slip away from him whenever he approached it. He was filled with a demon of anger, but that did not serve him. He again went now here, now there, and always he seemed to be doing the wrong thing. For once that strange, sure knowledge innate in him, part of his blood and his bones, of the right inevitable thing to do, had left him, and he could only act on impulse and hope that it would turn out well, which it never did. The captain, who was a forward, pausing beside him for a moment, said, "Go on, Cole; you can play better than that." He knew that his worst forebodings were fulfilled.

THEN, just before the whistle went for half-time, just when he was at his busiest, he had a curious distinct picture of Uncle Samuel, the red-apple tree, and Hamlet lying on the floor of the studio, waiting for his rat. People talk about concentration and its importance, and there is nobody who has ever played a game well but will agree that to let your mind wander at a very critical moment is fatal, but this was not so much the actual wandering of a mind as of a curious insistence from without of this other picture that went with the scene in which he was figuring. It was like the pouring of cold, clear water upon his hot and muddled brain. It was also as though Uncle Samuel, in his thick, good-natured voice, had said to him, "Now, look here; I know nothing about this silly game that you're trying to play, but I'm here to see you go through it, and the two of us together it's impossible to beat."

The whistle went before he had time to realize the effects of this little intrusion. He stood about during the interval, talking to no one, wishing he were dead, but armored in a cold resolve. After all, he would not write to Uncle Samuel and tell him that he'd been left out of the school fifteen because he hadn't played well enough. No one as yet had scored. The teams seemed to be very evenly matched, which was a bad thing for the school. Every one in the school-team was depressed, and the men in the rest were equally elated. If the whole truth were known, the play in the first half had been very ragged indeed, but as Mr. Thompson explained to the lady

visitor, "You mustn't expect anything else early in the term." She made the fatuous remark that "after all, they were such *little* boys," which made Mr. Thompson reply with more heat than true politeness required that his boys, even though they were all under fourteen, could on their day show as good a game as any public school, to which the lady visitor replied that she was sure that they could—she thought they played wonderfully for such little boys.

The whistle sounded and the game tumbled about, up and down, in and out. Jeremy knew now that all was well. His "game-sense" had suddenly come back to him, and the ball seemed to know its master, to tumble to him just when he wanted it, to stick in his hands when he touched it, and even to smile at him when it was quite a long way off, as though it were saying to him, "I'm yours now, and you can do what you like with me." He brought off a neat piece of collaring, then a little later passed the ball back to his three-quarters, who got, for the first time that day, a clear run leading to a try in the far corner of the field. Then there came a moment when all the rest forwards were dribbling the ball, the school forwards at their heels but not fast enough to stop their opponents, and he was down on the ball, had it packed tight under his arm, lying flat upon it, and the whole world of boots, legs, knees, bodies seemed to charge over him.

A queer sensation that was—everything falling upon him as though the ceiling of the world had suddenly collapsed. Then the sensation of being buried deep in the ground, bodies wriggling and heaving on top of him, his nose, chin, eyes deep in earth, some huge leg with a gigantic boot at the end of it hovering like a wild animal just above his head, and then the whistle and the sudden clearing of the ground away from him, his impulse to move and his discovery that his right leg hurt like a piercing sword.

He tried to rise and could not. He was quite alone now—the sky and the wind, the field and the distant hills encircling him, with nobody else in the world. The game stopped; people came back to him. They felt his leg, and it hurt desperately, but not, he knew at once, so desperately that he never would be able to use it again. They rubbed his calf and jerked his knee. He

heard somebody say, "Only a kick—no bones broken," and he set his teeth and stumbled to his feet and stood for a moment feeling exquisite pain. Then, like an old man of ninety, he tottered along. At this there was universal applause from behind the ropes. There were cries of: "Well stopped, Stocky!" "Good old Stocky!" and he would not have exchanged that moment for all the prizes in the book shop.

"Are you all right?" his captain shouted across to him. He nodded his head, because he certainly would have burst into tears if he had spoken, and he was biting his lower lip until his teeth seemed to go through to his gums. But, in that marvelous fashion that all footballers know, his leg became with every movement easier, and although there was a grinding pain there, he found he could move about quite easily and soon was in the thick of it once more.

He was only a "limper" to the end of that game, but he did one or two things quite nicely and had the happiness of seeing the school score another two tries, which put the issue of the game beyond doubt. At the end, after cheers had been given and returned, the pain in his leg reasserted itself once more and he could only limp very feebly off the field, but he had the delirious happiness of the captain, who was going to Rugby next year and was therefore very nearly a man, putting his hand on his shoulder and saying:

"That was a plucky game of yours, Cole. Hope your leg isn't bad."

"Oh, it isn't bad at all, thank you," he said very politely. "I almost don't feel it." Which was a terrific lie. He had done well. He knew that from the comments on every side of him. The crowd had forgotten his earlier failure, which, if he had only known it, should have taught him that word of wisdom invaluable to artists and sportsmen alike: "Don't be discouraged by a bad beginning. It's the last five minutes that count." Finally, there was Riley.

"You didn't play badly," he said. "You were better than Millett."

LATER, he was sitting with Riley, squashed into a corner of Magg's, eating doughnuts. The crowd in there was terrific and the atmosphere like a slab of chocolate. Riley and he were pressed close together with boys on every side of them;

the noise was deafening. It was the last ten minutes before Magg's closed. It was Saturday evening, and every one had pocket-money.

The two boys did not speak to one another. Jeremy's leg was hurting him horribly, but he was as happy as "five kings and a policeman," which was one of Uncle Samuel's ridiculous, meaningless phrases. His arm was round Riley's neck, more for support than for sentiment, but he did *like* Riley, and he did *like* Magg's. He was perhaps at that moment as completely alive as he was ever to be. He was so small that he was almost entirely hidden, but somebody caught sight of his hair, which would never lie down flat, and cried across the room,

"Three cheers for Stocky, the football hero!"

The cheers were hearty, if a little absent-minded, the main business of the moment being food and not football. Jeremy, of course, was pleased, and in his pleasure overbalanced from the ledge of the table where he was sitting, slipped forward and disappeared. His leg hurt him too much, and he was too comfortable on the floor and too generally sleepy to bother to get up again, so he stayed there, his arm round Riley's leg, swallowing his last doughnut as slowly as possible, feeling that he would like to give doughnuts in general to all the world.

Yes; it had been a *fine* day, a splendid day, and there would be days and days and days——

Magg's was closing; he limped to his feet, and with their arms round one another's necks, Riley and he vanished into the dusk.

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By **Honoré Willsie**

Author of "Still Jim," "Godless Valley," etc.

Illustration by Remington Schuyler

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

BY THE election of Hugh Stewart, of Fort Sioux, to the governorship of Wyoming, the people of that state obtained an executive of a rare type—one who gave political service at the sacrifice of self. He—an enthusiastic paleontologist—had entered the contest after a deal with the women politicians by which they were to save a valuable fossil-bearing tract which he had inherited from an eccentric foster-uncle in exchange for his efforts to pass the Children's Code, which the old-time legislators would have none of.

The campaign, managed by his mother-in-law, Mrs. Morgan, and the astute Mrs. Ellis, chairman of the Children's Code Committee, had been a strenuous one, and owing to one serious complication had very nearly gone on the rocks. For Hugh's marriage had turned out badly, and was apparently hopelessly wrecked when he fell in love with Miriam Page.

Miriam, a clever business woman from Boston, had come to Fort Sioux for a vacation. Hugh's love for her was fully returned; more than that, she had faith in and ambitions for him that went far beyond the achievements of fossil-hunting, and it was

she who joined Pink Morgan, Hugh's father-in-law and proprietor of the Indian Massacre Hotel, in promoting a water-power scheme that would necessitate the inundation of the fossil-field and so keep Hugh from wasting his energies on what she considered utterly unimportant matters. Of these activities Hugh suspected nothing until Miriam turned up in Fort Sioux in the midst of the campaign, to the alarm and consternation of Hugh's friends, who knew only too well what capital his opponents would make out of the situation. But the disturbing element was made to realize her indiscretion and quickly took herself off.

By now, Jessie, Hugh's wife, knew that she alone had been responsible for the failure of their life together; the finer qualities of her nature asserted themselves, and she set about to try to regain her husband. He finally promised her he would never see Miriam again. The revelation of her duplicity had been a great blow to him. Then Jessie herself took a hand in the campaign by agreeing to plead with the cow-men to permit the sheep dead-line to be changed in order to placate some of the hidebound politicians in Cheyenne.

The election of the "Gray Stallion"—a

nickname bestowed on Hugh from the fact that he was wrongfully accused of hiding such an animal which his father-in-law coveted but which rightly belonged to Red Wolf, a friendly Sioux—was coincident with the news that Hugh had broken the provisions of his uncle's will by neglecting The Lariat book store to enter politics, and that the Old Sioux Tract had been sold. The name of the purchaser was unknown to him.

Several weeks later Hugh received a telegram from Salt Lake City saying that Miriam was desperately ill with pneumonia and had asked that he come to her. The hand of Death woke to life all the old fires of love, and he started at once in the *Dinosaur*, an air-plane that had been used for campaign purposes. It was driven by Martin, an ex-ace. It was bitter cold. At sunset they sighted a fuel-station and descended for gasoline. While there a young sheep-herder rode up with a pitiful tale. His wife was facing the premature arrival of a baby—no doctor nearer than Fort Sioux. Hugh quickly came to a decision. He sent Martin back for the doctor;—then followed the herder to the sheep wagon which was the latter's home. But the baby was born and the mother died before Martin could get back with the doctor. Hugh, appalled by the tragedy, resolved to save the baby.

IT WAS midnight when the first faint sound of the *Dinosaur's* engine cut through the night. It seemed to Hugh a long, long time before the door of the sheep wagon was jerked open and the familiar face of Doc Olson appeared against the night. A glance at the bed sufficed, and the doctor turned his attention to the baby. Hugh watched him anxiously. The doctor's ruddy face was very tender as he made his examination.

"Poor little girl!" he murmured. "Poor little girl! Hold the light steady, Governor. You kept her warm. That was right. Poor little girl! What's the young chap's name? George?" He turned to the sheep-herder. "George, where is the baby's clothing?"

George pulled a basket from under the bunk and gave it to Hugh. With what seemed to Hugh marvelous dexterity the doctor anointed the baby and wrapped it in roll after roll of little knit blankets which he ordered Hugh to extract from the basket.

"Now, George," he said, placing the baby in Hugh's arms while he repacked his case, "have you a sheepskin or two tanned down good and soft? That's right. Here you are, Hughie; roll the baby in these."

"What are you going to do?" asked George suddenly.

"Take the baby up to Fort Sioux, where she can be cared for," replied the doctor. "She hasn't even a fighting chance here."

George looked at him, his face working.

"I've gotta stay here with Dora—and the sheep. I can't seem to start thanking you folks. 'Specially the governor. I——"

"It's all right, old-timer," interrupted Hugh. "My one regret is that I was of no use."

Martin at this moment put his head cautiously in at the door.

"Come in, Martin," said the doctor. "Here's a little Christmas baby for us to take back up to Fort Sioux."

Martin looked at the bunk and removed his helmet. Hugh cleared his throat.

"Martin," he said, "did you get that cylinder fixed?"

"Yes, Governor."

"Then I guess I'll drive the plane back to Fort Sioux and leave you here with George for a couple of days. I can send back for you by Carl Brown. I'll wire up to Cheyenne for him."

"You don't need to do that," said George. "If Martin will stick by a day or so, Big Elijah was coming through here in a day or so to take—her—up to Fort Sioux."

"Fine! That's all right, Governor," said Martin. "Here—I'll feed the crowd before you make the start."

"Make it quick," ordered the doctor. "Minutes count with this little bundle."

He turned to take the baby from Hugh. But Hugh shook his head.

"Hands off, Doctor! This is my charge."

And he settled himself on the bench, his face bent thoughtfully above the quiet little burden in his arms.

It was barely breakfast-time when the *Dinosaur* rolled quietly across the field to the hangar below Fort Sioux. Hugh and the doctor alighted and tramped wearily up the trail toward the hotel. But Hugh was not to make his return thus quietly. Martin, on his hasty errand the night before, had found time to tell Mrs. Morgan of Hugh's whereabouts. Hardly had the Gray

Stallion, still with the baby held jealously in his tired arms, put foot on the lowest step of the Massacre's snow-banked porch when a crowd burst from the hotel, from the barber shop, from anywhere and nowhere. There was the bare beginning of a cheer, quickly broken as the portent of the lonely little sheepskin bundle in Hugh's arm broke upon the crowd. Then somebody said in a hushed voice,

"Did the mother die, Governor?"

"Yes," replied Hugh simply. "But Doc Olson thinks we can pull the baby through. It's a little girl." A quick murmur rose. Hugh shook his head. "Wait a moment, friends! Let's not make capital of this." He hesitated, looking for a long moment from one familiar, understanding face to another. "We can't make capital of it," he repeated brokenly. "The cost was too great." He went on mounting the steps in a silence that was poignantly sympathetic.

HE SLEPT until mid-afternoon. It was Johnny Parnell who wakened him.

"This telegram just came for you, Governor. I thought you'd better have it as quick as you could."

Hugh sat up in bed, staring from the unopened telegram to Johnny's troubled eyes.

"It's that, then, is it, Johnny?"

"Yes, Hughie. Miriam Page died this morning."

Hugh twisted his brown hands together, and there was a long silence. He gazed at the unopened message as though he would imprint forever on his mind its shape and color. Johnny did not stir. At last Hugh looked up at him.

"The inscrutability of it, Johnny! The wastage!"

"It isn't wastage," said Johnny sturdily. "That baby ain't waste, and, by Jupiter, the place last night's work gave you in folks' hearts ain't waste!"

Hugh moved impatiently. Then he forgot Johnny as Miriam's loveliness flashed before his inward vision. But even as the vision came it was replaced by the look of unutterable sweetness with which Dora had finished her task. And once again Johnny saw the familiar white line appear along Hugh's long jaw.

"I must get up, Johnny. Do you suppose you could rustle a tray of breakfast over here for me while I shave?"

"I'd get you the earth on a tray if you wanted it!" exclaimed Johnny, striding out of The Lariat.

It was Jessie who brought the breakfast in. She was quite casual about it, nodding to Hugh as she placed the tray on his desk near the stove. Hugh knotted his tie and sat down in silence. Not until he had finished did Jessie attempt to speak. Then she said, still casually,

"Hughie, when did you plan to go after Judge Proctor?"

"I've been trying right along to get an interview with him," replied Hugh. "There is something strange about the whole thing. I can get no details from any one. I wouldn't have believed it possible that any of that crowd could have reached the judge. Why, he was one of Uncle Bookie's best friends! He knew how Uncle Bookie felt about the Old Sioux Tract."

Jessie was suddenly very white and uneasy. Her deep eyes glowed with anxiety as she rose and, standing before Hugh, said:

"Hughie, that other crowd didn't reach the judge. I did."

"You!" exclaimed Hugh.

Jessie nodded.

"We all knew that they were trying to force the sale on the plea of your week spent working on Jimmy's dinosaur and on Fred's work. I thought two could work that game; so I went to him and we hatched a scheme based on the fact that you'd broken the literal terms of the will when you started to give all your time to politics. I don't know how the old judge worked up the legal end of it. But, anyhow, a group of the cattlemen bid in the dude ranch. And you remember that legacy of mine? I bid in the Old Sioux Tract. You can have 'em both any way or time you want to arrange for them."

Hugh stared at Jessie in amazement.

"Jessie! Jessie!"

Jessie walked slowly to the rear window. Slowly she walked back again to Hugh.

"Hughie, I never have known what you really think about things. Before Bookie's death, I couldn't even guess. But now, somehow, I understand without being told. And I believe that you deserve the best we all can give you."

"I don't, Jessie! I don't!" cried Hugh. "You must not! Jessie, you break me with your generosity."

Jessie smiled at him wistfully, lifted the tray and walked slowly to the door. There she paused, to say slowly:

"Hugh, I don't think it's generosity. It's just—it's just my—it's just that I am, as I warned you, a great lover." Then she went out.

Her exit was the signal for half a dozen impatient politicians to enter, and for the rest of the day Hugh was swamped with work.

JESSIE had not found the swap suggested by Johnny Parnell—cows for sheep—an easy matter to arrange. In spite of their frank recognition of the debt the party owed Mrs. Ellis, it was perhaps almost too much to ask of a cow-man that he consider a ten-mile shift of the sheep dead-line as paid for by the preservation of the maternity-center section of the Children's Code. At least, no one but Jessie Morgan would have had even a gambling chance to swing the deal. But Jessie should have had six months instead of six weeks to handle the matter. And the last week of December found the legislature working feverishly to pass the Hospital Bill under cover of an unshakable filibuster. Mrs. Ellis, fighting desperately and gamely, had begun to break a little under the strain. And Hugh had resolutely thrust thought of the Sioux Tract from his mind in a final endeavor to help this woman who was so rare a friend, not only to himself but to Wyoming.

But though he spent the remainder of Christmas day in strenuous conference with one group after another, no feasible plan was brought forward that might save this most vital clause of the code.

Hugh spent a restless night and woke in the morning with a sense of confusion and anxiety. It seemed to him that somehow he must have a few hours to himself—that if he could be alone on the plains for even a short time, he would be able to come to a decision which he felt dimly and uneasily was forming within him. He was conscious that, somehow, out of the chaos and pain of the past two years a trail was beginning to emerge which he might have the strength to follow. And he was despairingly eager to be on his way.

Mrs. Ellis came in while he was finishing his breakfast, and he tried haltingly to explain something of this to her. She leaned back in her chair wearily.

"You mean that you have a plan you think will work?" she asked.

Hugh shook his head.

"No, I haven't, Mrs. Ellis. But I have an insane desire to mount Fossil and go up to the dinosaur cave or to some other spot where I have worked. I feel as if, there, this disorder in my brain might fall into the old order. I used to be able to think straight at will. But—particularly since the election—" He hesitated.

Mrs. Ellis looked at him understandingly.

"I know," she said softly. "After all, there is nothing gets a man's marrow like a woman. And she was extraordinarily lovely."

Hugh stirred restlessly.

"There are other things that get into one's marrow—perhaps not with so much pain but with just as much disturbing power. A recognition of your own inner failure, and of life's brevity and unimportance."

Mrs. Ellis rose and slowly crossed to Hugh's side. She looked down into his tired eyes, then smoothed the hair back from his forehead and kissed him.

"If your mother were living," she said, "she'd gather you to her heart and comfort you as no other woman can. My dear, go mount Fossil, sweat your way up to the cave and then come back and tell me what you find there."

Hugh lifted her plump hand to his cheek, rested against it for a moment, then went to prepare for the ride.

It was—as he, of course, knew it would be—an exceedingly heavy trip up to the cave. And he was glad that this was so. Fossil broke trail willingly enough along the river-edge as long as they were on the flats. But when the cañon walls began to hem them in, gradually crowding them closer and closer to the raging, ice-caked current, he began to struggle to turn homeward. But Hugh forced him on to within a mile of the cave, where the trail began to lift. Here, under the shelter of a wide ledge, he left the horse and went on afoot.

Just before he reached the cave Hugh paused to gaze at a green promontory that pushed abruptly into the river opposite. Even in winter there was below and a little behind it a quiet pool in which a boat might rest.

Arms folded, Hugh gazed at the pool, seeing it not in a winter setting but as it

had been on that summer's day when he and Miriam had rested for a perfect hour on its placid bosom.

After a time he clambered on heavily and, jerking open the door, entered the cave.

He built a fire, ate his lunch—it was long past noon—and then, seated on a box close to the flames, he began his vigil. This must not be mistaken for a tragic moment. Hugh was not burying his dead. He was deliberately seeking to swing into the rhythm which he had lost, which, he told himself bitterly, he probably never had had. He was beginning with Bookie and his mother and working deliberately down through his life, examining himself for the first time with a merciless eye.

It was a long process. But his thought in coming to this spot where he had worked had been sound. His mind did begin to function in the old, calm, orderly manner. And when his panorama had been set in sequence and began to move cleanly and clearly across his vision, he was able to gaze upon it as the man from Mars. He saw the little boy Hugh, lugging broken bits of fossil turtle-shell home to his mother. He saw the adolescent Hugh, riding herd for Bookie, with a little bag of fossil fragments hanging from the pommel of the saddle. He saw Hugh at college, concentrating on geology to the exclusion of sports and friendships. He saw Hugh mad with first love—love for Jessie. And he saw Hugh turn from love and from Jessie when she scorned his fossils. He saw Bookie endeavoring by every tactful method he could evolve to force Hugh to see himself and his capacities in other lights than that of paleontology. He checked over his attitude toward Pink, Mrs. Morgan, Jessie, Miriam, Mrs. Ellis, and he saw that he never had judged of them save as they interfered or did not interfere with his chosen work.

Again and again he ran the panorama through, pausing over certain sections to analyze motives until he had satisfied himself that, once and for all, he understood the man Hugh. And it was with a sudden and overwhelmingly thrilling sense of shame and of satisfaction that he realized that at last he had envisaged the truth about himself. Life holds no more final satisfaction than this for any man.

His had been the selfishness of the unsocial nature. Selfishness. Unsociability.

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1923

These were the two qualities that had wiped out the mighty creatures whose fossil remains he had worshiped. Fang against fang, claw against claw, the Creator had permitted the experiment to go on to its own extermination. Fang against fang, claw against claw, the human experiment, too, was speeding on its way. Nor would the Creator raise a finger to alter its course. For, with the fang and the claw, He had given to humanity the capacity for thought. It was within man's own power to work toward extermination or toward a perfection that dazzled Hugh's fine imagination to contemplate. Unsociability. Selfishness. These were the qualities that he had been sharing with the dinosaurs.

The fire had burned out. Hugh rose and went slowly from the cave, pausing without the opening to gaze on the unspeakable beauty of the moonlit night.

He drew a great breath—not of sadness. At last he had caught the rhythm. He made his way back to Fossil like a man awakened from a long nightmare.

AS HUGH'S horse trotted swiftly across the bridge, he was met by Fred Allward, who, even by starlight, gave the impression of laboring under great excitement. He pushed his horse up to jog along beside Fossil.

"Evening, Governor! I thought this was the only way to catch you alone. Look here; Red Wolf is kind of in trouble."

Hugh pulled Fossil up opposite Martin's hut beside the *Dinosaur's* hangar.

"Martin's in Cheyenne. Let's go in here before some one sees me and interrupts us."

Within the shelter of the hut, Fred told his story rapidly.

"We got the dinosaur pretty well crated up before the big snow caught us last week. Then we went on an antelope-hunt, and, by heck, Hughie, we found Pink and a horse-ranch he's started up on the other side of Big Fang. He sure has cashed in! Why, Hughie, he's got a fine place there! He's put up a lot of buildings and he's got a Mormon family living in the house. But Pink's the big chief."

"How did you discover all this?" asked Hugh. He sat down and lit his pipe, glad to forget for a moment his greater cares.

"Well, I've been suspicious that Pink was working in that country for a long time.

When I saw the ranch-house I was sure it was his. So I left Red Wolf in the alfalfa-stack beyond the home corrals when we finally struck the place. It took us three days to work up the valley from over the mesa. The snow was a million feet deep. We was half dead when we got to Pink's place. So I left Red Wolf and rolled up and banged on the kitchen door as brave as thunder. And the Mormon woman came to the door and in five minutes I knew all about the ranch and that Pink wasn't expected home until the next day. So I invited Red Wolf and me there for the night.

"Peterson, the husband, was off for supplies with Pink, so Mrs. Peterson was there alone. She'd been warned evidently not to talk about the gray stallion. But next morning I chopped a load of squaw wood for her while Red Wolf he prowled off on a hunt. He came back in a couple of hours and give me a look which I knew meant he'd found what he wanted. So I borrowed some bacon from Mrs. Peterson and we beat it.

"And, Hughie, up in a kind of cave and natural corral, where there was not one chance in a thousand of any one locating him, was the stallion.

"Well—do you know?—Red Wolf sort of lost his head when he saw that horse. First time I ever saw him show excitement. The stallion was free in the corral, and Red Wolf ropes him. And, of course, at that moment Pink comes along, riding hell bent over our trail. And as he comes round the cedar clump that hides the cave he takes a pot-shot at old Red Wolf. He grazed the old Injun's cheek. I hadn't any gun, but I rode my horse into Pink's. And old Red Wolf came up and took Pink's gun and threw it away. Hughie, that old Sioux had sure gone amuck."

"Good heavens, Fred! When did all this happen?"

"Three days ago. I know I'm making an awful long story of it. But I'm trying to make you see just how it was. I won't try to describe that mix-up. Old Red Wolf he yells at me: 'Keep off 'im, Fred! Keep off 'im! I'll fix 'im for hurting Hughie. Me, I'll fix 'im a heap.' So me, I naturally backed off—enjoying the round-up. Never thought of anything serious. Snow flying, you know, and horses squealing, and old Red Wolf banging

into Pink's bridle and trying to rope Pink with his free hand. Pink swearing and trying to kick the old Injun with his spurs. Lord, it was funny! I laughed and laughed.

"And then, all of a sudden, Hughie, Red Wolf had Pink down in the snow, had him leg-tied and helpless, and he stood up over him and made him a speech about that old ranch him and his wife stole and about you and what Pink had done to you. Why, that old Sioux had the whole thing, stuff I never heard of about your wife and that Miss Page taking you away from the plains and, last of all, the stallion, which, it appears, was to go for you special. Pink he cussed all the time and rolled round, and old Red Wolf jabbered until he actually foamed at the mouth.

"And then—by God!—Red Wolf pulls out his hunting-knife, jabs off Pink's cap and takes a scalp-lock off of him about the size of a two-bit piece."

Hugh gasped and dropped his pipe.

"What——"

"I know it." Fred held up his hand to prevent Hugh interrupting. "I let out a yell, almost as loud as Pink's. Red Wolf he put the scalp-lock in his pocket, mounted his horse and beat it, leading the gray stallion. I took my handkerchief and Pink's and bandaged the top of his head before I untied him. Hughie, he was the maddest, sickest miner I ever saw. But he didn't make any move to go after Red Wolf then. And I took him back to his bunch of Petersons and dumped him. Then I came hotfoot in here to you."

HUGH'S face in the candle-light showed conflicting emotions that for a moment made speech impossible. But finally he gasped,

"Is the wound a bad one?"

"Mighty neat job, I'd say. He nipped out a piece of scalp on the crown of Pink's old dome about as big as a quarter. Must be awful sore, and if he don't get no balder it won't show—unless Pink gets proud of it and makes an exhibit of it. Of course there's mighty few living men has been scalped by a Sioux. Hughie, Red Wolf was a raving maniac. Why, I wouldn't have dared to interfere if he'd tried to cut off Pink's nose!"

The two men stared at each other. Hugh's lips twitched, and in spite of his realization of the seriousness of the

situation for his old friend Red Wolf, his eyes twinkled. Fred suddenly burst into a loud guffaw.

"My Lord! Ain't it funny, Hughie? Listen; I know you are the governor and you'd oughtn't to laugh when your father-in-law has been scalped, but go ahead. I'll never tell on you. Him being at the bottom of the row over the dam-site and all. And all the stuff we couldn't exactly kill him for. And Red Wolf punishing him this way. It's absolutely perfect, Hughie!"

Hughie, still with the twinkle in his eye, heaved a great sigh. He rescued his pipe and refilled and lit it. Fred watched him with interest.

"Governor, it's the first time I've seen you look like a human being since before Bookie died."

"I'm—I'm filled with a number of human thoughts, Fred," said Hughie. "Among others, what shall I do for Red Wolf?"

Fred nodded.

"That's why I hurried to you. The poor old Injun is in serious trouble. And if he stays mad, he's as liable as anything in the world to war-whoop through Fort Sioux with that scalp-lock in his buttonhole. It ain't refined, Governor, for you to look amused."

"I know it, Fred," said Hugh apologetically. "This will be terribly mortifying to Jessie and her mother. We've got to keep it quiet if we can."

"Can't be done," returned Fred promptly. "Pink's going to pose as a hero and turn the whole of Wyoming over to get Red Wolf jailed."

"He won't get Red Wolf jailed." Hugh's jaw was set in the familiar way. "He'll not harm——"

Fred interrupted.

"A hair of Red Wolf's head!" Then he went off again into helpless laughter.

Again Hugh chuckled, but broke off to say,

"Nevertheless Fred, it is serious for the dear old Indian, and I've got to choke Pink off somehow." He rose as he spoke. "I've got to go up to Cheyenne to-morrow morning. I'll only be gone a day. You can reach me at the Plains Hotel. If Pink gets in here before I return, your job is to get him locked up and wire me. If Red Wolf turns up, try to do the same by him."

"Try" is the right word, Governor. If

he's still mad when he turns up, I'll crawl under the bed and stay there till you get back."

"All right, old-timer!" Hugh rocked with silent laughter for a moment, then went out and mounted his horse.

He rode at a gallop to the Lariat and entered the conference he found waiting for him there with a look of keenness new to those who had worked with him through so many weary months.

THE next morning, before Mrs. Ellis, Johnny Parnell or any of his henchmen found him, Hugh had boarded the limited for Cheyenne. Before mid-afternoon he had located old Charlie Whitom and had asked him to arrange for a conference with the "gang."

The session was held in Hugh's suite at the hotel. It did not look like a gang—this group of keen-eyed, brown-faced plainsmen. But Hugh had no illusions as to its ability to drive a hard or an unclean bargain. He had come with his barter clearly planned, but, sitting before the waiting group, he was for a moment at a loss as to how to begin. His original idea had been to give no explanation as to motives. But, eying his audience with his new clarity of understanding, he believed that he ought to tell these men something of the truth. Yet how to do it? He recalled vividly the reception old Whitom had given his confession the previous year.

He began to talk about Mrs. Ellis. He told of his meeting with her and of her frank hostility toward him. He worked on carefully through the year, his hearers gradually allowing themselves to show a casual interest in his story. He told of his own indifference to the code and of the bargain he had struck with Mrs. Ellis on entering the political fight. Finally, he reached the point where he had induced Mrs. Ellis to give the reason for her interest in the Children's Code. He paused for a moment after this, hoping that the set faces before him would soften ever so little. But they did not. He hesitated; then he told the story of Dora. He told it very simply.

"I don't know how it may affect you folks," he said, in closing. "After all, I can give you only a feeble picture of the thing. But to me it made the Children's Code the most important legislation before Wyoming

to-day. It gave me a new idea of the function of government and of the duty of the men at the head of the government. It made me see Mrs. Ellis as the foremost lawmaker of the state, the citizen to whom we ought to raise a monument, at the mention of whose name we ought to remove our hats." He paused.

"It's a pretty story, Stewart," said a sneering voice. "But did it happen?"

Hugh flushed, and while fighting to keep a grip on himself he slowly lit a cigar. Old Whitom suddenly leaned forward in his chair, staring at Hugh's hands.

"Stewart, your hands are peeling bad! By God, that water must have been boiling hot!"

Hugh hastily thrust his hands into his pockets and a dead silence filled the room. Then the voice that had sneered said, with husky contrition,

"Sorry I made that break, Stewart."

Hugh rose slowly from his chair.

"I have a proposition to make to you gentlemen," he said. "It is this: If you will permit the Children's Code to go through without any change whatever, and with no legislation that will weaken its efficiency, I will withdraw my opposition to the building of the dam at Thumb Butte."

Old Charlie Whitom came to his feet.

"Do you know what you're saying?"

"Yes, I do," replied Hugh.

"But we all thought the saving of the fossils was all you came into politics for!" shouted Whitom.

"It was. But I've changed. That's what I've been trying to explain to you."

The old politician stared at Hugh, frankly bewildered.

"What's back of it, Stewart?"

"I've told you the story, Mr. Whitom. I'm no hand at intrigue," replied Hugh.

Several of the men laughed.

"What do you call it, then, Stewart?"

Hugh smiled and shook his head. There was a buzz of conversation; then Whitom exclaimed,

"Look here, Stewart; there's a devil of a lot of opposition to that code in the state!"

"You mean," asked Hugh innocently, "that you don't want to make yourself unpopular, or that you can't deliver?"

Whitom looked at Hugh sharply. Some one in the group gave a guffaw that was quickly suppressed. Whitom had his fol-

lowers well in hand. There was no further interruption while the old warrior and the new warrior measured each other's strength. Hugh had learned in the political fight in the year just ended how greatly, both financially and as a matter of his prestige as party leader, old Charlie wanted the dam built at Fort Sioux. He had little doubt as to the outcome of the session. So he waited patiently.

"Can you deliver?" demanded the old man. "We understood the Eastern Electric got control of the tract, but we couldn't verify it. They swore they didn't."

"My wife bought it in," said Hugh.

"I'll be hanged!" grunted Whitom. Then, curiously, "How are you going to justify yourself to the state for reneging?"

"Tell 'em the truth."

Whitom scratched his head and grinned with extreme satisfaction.

"Looks to me like we will all get some glory out of it—eh?"

A chuckle went round the room, and a grizzled-haired member of the legislature who had been leading the filibuster said,

"And so you can't intrigue, as you call it, Stewart."

Hugh lifted his chin.

"You fail to get the point, Brownell, that I think Whitom has finally got. What I've told you really happened."

"Oh, I get that, old-timer," hastily explained Brownell. "But what impresses me is the skill with which you use facts."

Hugh grinned and picked up his overcoat.

"I'm going to get the six-o'clock flier back to Fort Sioux. There will be details, Whitom, which perhaps you won't mind taking up with me in The Lariat, or wait for till after the inauguration."

Whitom nodded.

"By the way, how is the bookselling business, Stewart?"

"The trading in beadwork for bound magazines is noticeable," replied Hugh. "But since Johnny Parnell went into politics, the sale of Western fiction has fallen off about ninety per cent."

There was a laugh, during which Hugh made his way from the room.

HUGH had had some big moments in his life, but he was sure that to none of them had he looked forward as he did to the moment when he could tell Mrs. Ellis of the

fate of the code. He desired very much to choose exactly the right and dramatic moment for the announcement—when he should be alone with the mother of the code and she, of course, in black despair. But, somehow, big moments are difficult to arrange for. Johnny Parnell, Jessie and Mrs. Ellis arrived together the next morning before Hugh had finished shaving. Hugh gave the group a disgusted glance and lathered his chin again. None of the three heeded the look or the lather.

"Looks like we couldn't put that swap over, Governor—" began Johnny.

"Some one has sold out to the Whitom gang," said Mrs. Ellis.

"We aren't sure." Jessie's deliberate voice took up the tale. "But I was certain, last night that I had the cattlemen's committee solid. This morning the chairman sent me word that we'd better call off the whole matter."

Hugh wiped his face. Mrs. Ellis sat forward impatiently.

"For heaven's sake, Hughie, haven't you waked up yet?"

"I don't see why you'd thrust a load like this on a man who's had no breakfast," returned Hugh plaintively. "However, since you're here, I may as well endure it."

"Why did you go to Cheyenne yesterday?" demanded Mrs. Ellis, unmoved by Hugh's plaint.

"Please, ma'am," he replied, coming forward to stand meekly before her, "I went to Cheyenne to arrange with old Charlie Whitom to let us put the Children's Code through as it is."

"Don't joke about it, Hughie!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis.

"I'm not joking. I made a swap of my own."

"You made it? What swap?" roared Johnny.

"I told him he could build the dam at Thumb Butte if he'd deliver us the Children's Code."

Dead silence. Finally,

"But, Hughie, your stone birds!" gasped Johnny.

Hugh's lips were a little stiff, but he replied cheerfully,

"I'll find them elsewhere—perhaps."

Jessie stared at him. Mrs. Ellis, plump figure rigid, face white and set, put out an uncertain hand.

"Hughie, explain! I can't stand it."

Hugh, with his familiar wistful smile, took her hand in his and said,

"It seemed a just sort of thing to do." He paused, realizing that he must make himself clear. He turned slowly to his old position against the counter. "I've been unhappy," he said. "I've been lonely. I've been self-centered and socially blind. But since Bookie's death—" He paused. This was hard to go over again.

Jessie suddenly interrupted.

"Mrs. Ellis, you don't want him to explain, do you? That kind of explanation hurts."

"I don't want to hurt him," said Mrs. Ellis pitifully. "I just want to know what happened. It's life or death to me, Jessie."

"Well," Hugh went on abruptly, "I made up my mind that the Children's Code was the biggest thing in Wyoming. So yesterday I had a conference with Charlie Whitom and his gang. I offered them the thing they wanted most—the Thumb Butte dam-site—and they snapped it up."

Mrs. Ellis came slowly to her feet.

"Hughie! Hughie! Hughie!"

Hugh tried to make his voice casual.

"Fine—isn't it?"

But Mrs. Ellis would not have it so. She threw her arms about him.

"Hughie! Hughie!" And she broke down and began to cry.

HUGH, his arm about her heaving shoulders, smiled down on her gray head but said nothing.

It was Johnny who saved the situation from becoming too poignant.

"Well, old-timer, for a man with an empty stomach, I'll say you have done some business this morning!" he boomed.

Mrs. Ellis whirled round and wiped her eyes.

"My heavens, Jessie! Can't you get your husband some breakfast?"

Jessie shook her head with a mischievous smile.

"I'd say that was your duty, Mrs. Ellis."

The mother of the code strangled a sob with a laugh.

"I'd get him his breakfast for the rest of his life if he wanted me to! No; don't come, Jessie. I want to get the tray myself." She hurried out.

"I reckon she'll load that tray so's she'll

need help," Johnny grumbled, and he slammed the door behind him.

Hugh chuckled and lit his pipe; then he looked at Jessie seriously.

"In my opinion," he said, "Mrs. Ellis is the biggest figure in Wyoming."

"You and she will do some real work in Cheyenne." Jessie nodded her head. "Hughie, does your sacrifice mean that you are giving up paleontology?"

Hugh's answer was given carefully.

"I haven't arranged a program for myself. I'm trying to keep the long view that my work has given me. I'm feeling my way toward the light. I can see a million years behind me—only one day ahead of me. It's very difficult. But I think I'm moving with the procession. After a time I may know whither. But I don't want to give up my work for good and all. Jessie, do you think I ought to?"

"No!" cried Jessie. "No!"

His regard of her for the first time during the interview became personal.

"Do you know what you are saying, Jessie?"

"Yes; I know what I'm saying. You've sacrificed enough. You've suffered enough."

"Sacrifice! Jessie, it was your legacy that gave Mrs. Ellis the Sioux Tract."

"No, it wasn't, Hughie! It was my legacy that gave the tract to you. I didn't in the least care what became of that money except that it give you something tremendous. Of course, I'm glad that Mrs. Ellis has her code. She is big, and I am going to help her every way I can. But, to me, the point about the legacy is not that it delivered the code but that it allowed me to make up to you for some of the neglect of other years."

"You shame me, Jessie," said Hugh.

"That's not the feeling I want to give you." She gave a gesture of impatience.

Hugh's gaze rested on hers.

"Jessie, I am only a shell of a man. The sort of feeling that I had for Miriam can come but once."

"I don't want the sort you gave her." Jessie lifted her chin proudly. "I want what you can give the real me. The me that was born this summer out on the plains. The kind of love that you couldn't give me before, nor Miriam, because you—the you that gave Mrs. Ellis her code wasn't born until after Miriam died."

Hugh did not reply for a moment; then he said,

"My love for Miriam was very big and very real—even though the person I thought she was never existed."

"I know that." Jessie's lips quivered slightly, but her voice was steady. "And if you had remained the same man who gave Miriam that love, I'd know you could not care for me. Love is a curious thing, Hughie. If you are a growing, changing human being, old love drops away with the old habits of thought. It has to be so. If you are a person who reaches a young maturity and ceases to develop for good and all, first love will suffice."

Hugh watched her intently. The expression of wistfulness in his eyes deepened. He wanted to make Jessie feel how completely he did recognize the new fineness in her. He felt that all that she said was true. And yet he believed that he had nothing save this new respect to offer her. Jessie did not wait for him to speak, however.

"You're tired, Hughie," she said slowly; "much tireder than I. I've been concentrating all these months on one thing, while you've had demands on you that would break a common man."

"Jessie! Jessie! I wish I could give you all. Don't make excuses for me. I know what I've been. Selfish—selfish as even you can't realize. But——"

Her deliberate turning toward the door interrupted him. She did not speak until her hand was on the knob.

"I'm never going to bother you again, Hughie. Good-by, my dear." And she was gone—gone with, for the first time, the droop of failure in the upright line of her fine body.

The memory of this sudden change of posture stayed in the background of Hugh's thought all that busy day.

LATE that evening he and Mrs. Ellis were alone for a short time. The mother of the code was in a beatific frame of mind and had turned off enough work during the day to have exhausted half a dozen women. It was, however, a keen and alert eye that she turned on Hugh.

"Jessie told me to-day that she was not going to Cheyenne with you, but that she was taking up a permanent residence at the

ranch. Of course a man shouldn't ask his wife to give up her profession for any light reason. But I do wish she were going to the governor's mansion with you. Can't it be arranged?"

"I don't see how it can be, Mrs. Ellis."

"Have you tried, Hughie?"

"I haven't wanted to try. Surely you know enough of the circumstances, Mrs. Ellis, to realize that I have nothing to offer Jessie. I've grown to admire her as I never did before. But I can't pretend to be what I am not."

"Nobody asks you to be," sniffed Mrs. Ellis. "Hughie, I'm not a bit literary, but I have stored in my mind a few scraps of verse that mean a good deal to me." She quoted, thoughtfully,

"For to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstances, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty."

Hugh looked at her with deep understanding in his eyes.

"That's what made me give up the tract. At last I suffered enough to envisage truth."

"Yes, Hughie; you did. You finally saw the relationship between birth and death, between childhood and social progress. But you still are blind about the impulse back of it all."

"You mean the will to achieve?"

"Nonsense! Don't be so disgustingly impersonal, Hughie! I mean love—love of man for woman."

Hughie walked slowly the length of the room and back.

"What do you know about love, Mrs. Ellis?" he asked abruptly.

She looked up at him.

"Hughie, I know a great deal about it. I know enough to realize that I've missed the real thing and that I'm too old now ever to have it."

Hugh put his hand on her shoulder, and the two gazed into each other's eyes.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"It's quite all right with me." Mrs. Ellis smiled. "The code is big. But, for you, I feel as your mother would have felt. I grudge your missing the great thing. You'll not do your big work till you experience it."

"I have experienced it," said Hugh quietly.

"Miriam Page"—Mrs. Ellis chose each word carefully—"drew on the selfish, work-

centered side of your nature. It was so strongly developed a side that you experienced a simply tremendous sensation in connection with her. But, Hughie, you have left that side of you behind."

"Perhaps I have," agreed Hugh. "But does that mean going back to Jessie?"

"Going back? Hughie, no! Going forward! Jessie has suffered, too. And she is rather a tremendous person. Why, Hugh, just consider the attitude that she took toward Miriam Page!"

"No one appreciates it more than I do now." Hugh sighed as he spoke. "But"—he hesitated, then exclaimed vehemently: "Good God! Jessie is a great lover. She deserves to be married to a great lover. And I am only a collector of fossils."

Mrs. Ellis's answer was a quotation from her favorite Keats:

"On our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us as we pass
In glory that old Darkness——"

There was a long silence in The Lariat. Finally Mrs. Ellis rose.

"It's been my big day, Hughie, thanks to you. Good-night, my boy!"

And Hugh went to bed wondering just when and how he had come to such a derogatory opinion of himself as a lover.

EARLY the next morning Fred appeared, sidling into The Lariat in a manner at once mysterious and dignified. Hugh was alone.

"I got Pink, Governor," he said.

"Where?" exclaimed Hugh.

"Down in Martin's shack. I had to tell Martin when he got back yesterday. He sort of enticed him in. We saw him crossing the bridge at sunup. He was heading for Doc Olson."

"Has he seen you?" asked Hugh.

"Only my back view as I started up here for you. Can't you come down there?"

"Yes. Fred, how would it do to turn Mrs. Morgan loose on him?"

Fred grinned.

"I think Pink ought to be shot, but I'll be hanged if I think he deserves that much punishment—to have her turned on him. But if you fail, we'll try it."

Pink was sitting with Martin at breakfast, his head turbaned like a Hindu's, when

Hugh entered the hut, Fred at his heels. He did not return Hugh's greeting, and scowled at Fred's cheerful announcement:

"Well, boys, here's the Gray Stallion out for a morning's warm-up."

Hugh sat down on a soap-box.

"Fred told me about your trouble with Red Wolf, Pink," he began casually. "What do you plan to do about it?"

"None of your blank business!" growled Pink.

"Here! Don't you speak to the governor of this state like that!" snapped Martin.

"He's my son-in-law," sneered Pink.

"I don't care if he's your brother. You treat him with politeness or I'll take a scalp-lock out of you myself." Martin was red of face.

"Never mind all that," said Hugh impatiently. "What I want from Pink is a square answer to a square question. What are you going to try to do to my old friend Red Wolf?"

"I'm going to shoot him."

"You haven't the nerve. Come, Pink; talk straight man's talk to me, will you?"

Pink sat forward in his chair.

"What am I going to do to that blank, blank Sioux? Well, sir, I'm going to have the law on him. I got money—plenty of it. And I'll use it to get that Indian with."

"No, Pink; I don't think you will," said Hugh. "You got what you richly deserve, and you are going to take your punishment like a man. For you were a man in the old days, Pink, before you threw aside decency to put over the big treachery on me."

"I'm to go thank the Injun for his delicate attentions, I suppose," snarled Pink.

"No; you are just to let him alone and keep your mouth shut about the whole performance. Laying aside everything else, you have no right to mortify your wife and Jessie by starting that kind of a row."

"Very considerate of them all of a sudden, ain't you?" grunted Pink.

"Something like that, yes," agreed Hugh. "Pink, I don't want to threaten you about this. I just want to appeal to your sense of decency. Forget your grudge against me. Why should you harbor one? You have won at every point. You put over the Thumb Butte site."

"I did not! You've blocked it."

"No, I haven't. I gave in on it." Pink blinked as though he were dizzy, and Hugh

went on: "You have the dam-site. You destroyed my greatest dinosaur. You forced me into politics. You have your horse-ranch and plenty of money. You've acted like a skunk for a couple of years. And all you've had to pay for the whole achievement is a bit of scalp flesh. Forget Red Wolf and be a sport, Pink."

AS PINK listened to Hugh's gentle, beguiling voice, his fat face softened. Hugh was infinitely persuasive as he leaned toward his father-in-law.

"Come now, Pink; you and I have stood back to back through many and varied fights. Let's let bygones go and start fresh. You let the gray stallion go and I'll let the dinosaur go."

Pink's face hardened instantly. He brought his fist down on the table.

"No! I want that horse, and I'll have it. And I'll nail that Sioux's hide up on the penitentiary door at Rawlins."

"Is that final, Pink?" asked Hugh.

"Yes, it is!"

"Very well." Hugh turned to Martin. "I wish you'd go up to the Indian Massacre and bring Mrs. Morgan down here."

Martin picked up his mackinaw.

"Wait a minute!" said Pink. "Wait a minute!"

"No," Hugh spoke grimly. "I'm through arguing with you, Pink. Go quickly, Martin."

"But I don't want her in on it. Anyhow"—with sudden cheerfulness—"she's washed her hands of me and won't come."

"We'll see," said Hugh.

In a remarkably short time the jitney backed outside the hut and Mrs. Morgan came in, followed by Martin. Pink slumped sullenly in his chair. Hugh placed a chair for his mother-in-law, then stood against the wall.

"Mrs. Morgan," he said, "Fred and Red Wolf located the gray stallion up on Pink's ranch last week. Red Wolf tried to get away with the stallion. Pink took a shot at the old Indian, the bullet grazing his cheek. Then Pink and Red Wolf had a fearful mix-up, which resulted in the old Sioux taking a piece of scalp about the size of a quarter off the top of Pink's head. Then he got away, taking with him the scalp-lock and the stallion. I've failed to persuade Pink not to make trouble over the

matter. That's why I've sent for you."

Mrs. Morgan looked at her husband with interest.

"Why, he must have gone crazy! He really scalped you, Pink? Well, you deserved it. I hope it will make a better man of you."

"Do you mean to tell me that I shouldn't have the law on that blank Sioux?" shouted Pink.

"I think he ought to be sent to jail, but you aren't going to send him there just the same. I've suffered all the mortification from your lack of refinement I ever intend to, Pink."

"No; it ain't refined to be scalped—I'll admit that!" roared Pink. "And it won't be refined for Red Wolf to be sent to Rawlins, either."

"He's not going to be sent to Rawlins," declared Mrs. Morgan. "Let this thing get into the courts, and all our early association with Red Wolf will come out. And while there was nothing illegal about what we did, I've begun to regret it and don't want it aired. It would mortify Jessie and me beyond words."

Pink was outraged. He rose, shaking his fists to the ceiling.

"And I'm to be scalped and robbed by a blank Injun to keep you from being mortified! Just let me tell you that I'm going to get that Indian and that horse if I have to tell the story to every man, woman and child in Wyoming!"

"Oh, no, you aren't," said Mrs. Morgan complacently. She sat studying him as she might have studied a recalcitrant horse. "You are a mess, Pink," she said finally, "in every way. I've washed my hands of you, and they are going to stay washed. But that doesn't say I'm going to let you make a laughing-stock of the family when I can prevent it. You come up to the hotel and go to bed and stay there till you can see sense."

"I won't!" shouted Pink.

"You'll drive us back, won't you, Martin?" asked Mrs. Morgan. "Come along, Pink."

"Want any help, Mrs. Morgan?" Fred started slowly toward Pink.

"No. He'll come. It's early enough so's no one will notice us. My goodness, Pink, you're dirty! You come straight home and get a bath and go to bed."

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And Pink followed after her docilely, but casting, as he did so, an ugly glance at Hugh. Hugh considered the glance for a moment; then he said to Fred:

"Well, he's safe for a few days, anyhow. I hope we'll have as much luck in getting hold of Red Wolf."

But Red Wolf did not materialize, and in the stress of preparations for the inaugural, Hugh almost forgot the matter.

JOHNNY PARNELL installed himself as Hugh's master of ceremonies with regard to the inauguration. Not that Johnny knew anything first-hand about installing a governor in office. But he did know that Hugh had an entire disregard of pomp and ceremony, and Johnny, who loved gesture, purposed that his old range-buddy should become chief executive of Wyoming with as elaborate a flourish as could be crowded into one short January day. Nor did he intend that any convention should be overlooked. So he urged Hugh to have Jessie present at the morning ceremonies and at the inaugural ball in the evening.

"I doubt if she'll come," said Hugh.

"She won't for me. I've tried her out," agreed Johnny. "But she will for you."

"I don't see why I should try to get her to do something she doesn't want to do," objected Hugh.

"Great suffering wildcats, man!" shouted Johnny. "She'd come if she knew you wanted her."

"But I don't want her," grunted Hugh. Johnny strode over to Hugh's chair.

"You mean to tell me, Stewart, after all that girl has done——"

"You're intruding again, Parnell," Hugh returned succinctly.

Johnny turned on his heel and went out, slamming the door behind him. But he had succeeded in making Hugh uneasy, and about noon Fort Sioux saw the governor-elect mount Fossil and start through the deep, fresh-fallen snow that covered the trail to the dude ranch.

There was utter silence, utter stillness. Hugh and Fossil moved alone in all the universe. Hugh breathed deep of the biting air and thought of the days to come at the governor's desk in Cheyenne. He was not sure that he was going to be able to stick it out.

Several miles from the ranch the solitude

was broken when Hugh caught sight of a figure moving rapidly along the trail before him. He could not at first distinguish whether it was man or woman. He spurred Fossil on and shortly picked up ski-tracks. A little later he saw that the skier was tall and slender and wore a scarlet mackinaw. It was Jessie, and he gave a long Sioux cry. She turned and moved slowly back toward him.

"Hello, Hughie!" she said, as Fossil galloped up. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Below zero, I guess. Been anywhere in particular, Jessie?"

"No. I like to ski. Magpie has gone lame."

"I came up to ask you to come to the inaugural ceremonies with me, Jessie."

Jessie looked up at him, cheeks crimson, eyes deep blue and inscrutable.

"Thanks, Hughie; I don't care to go."

"Johnny Parnell thinks it will look bad if you aren't there," said Hugh.

"Since when were you troubled by appearances?" drawled Jessie.

"Me? I'm not troubled at all. I want you to have the pleasure of being there."

The color receded from Jessie's cheeks, leaving her face singularly austere. She lifted her chin in the old gesture.

"Hughie, I guess you didn't understand the last thing I said to you the other day. I meant that I was through. As long as you needed me, or, I mean, as long as I could do things for you that no one else could, I was willing to humiliate myself. But now you don't need me any more."

"But don't you want to come to the ceremonies?" blundered Hugh.

"As the unloved wife of the great man?" asked Jessie. "No, thank you, Hughie. I haven't a sense of duty now to sustain me. I have planned an interesting life for myself. I don't need you, either. Go along and get yourself made into a governor."

Vaguely resentful Hugh stared at her.

"You don't care about me any more, Jessie?"

"Wouldn't it relieve you to know that I was through?" asked his wife.

Hugh still stared at her white face.

"I'd like to have something left out of the wreck of my life!" he exclaimed.

"What do you mean by 'wreck'?"

"Everything that I have cared about. You don't think I enjoy being governor, do

you? You don't think that I wouldn't swap one of those days I spent in the dinosaur cave getting out the triceratops for my whole term of office? Oh, I'll go through with it! But you, at least, must have no illusions about it."

"Hughie, I'm truly sorry about your work. You don't know how many of your speeches I've heard. You educated me, just as you did every one else."

"I wish I could have educated you years ago," said Hugh tensely. "Then you won't come up to Cheyenne, Jessie?"

"No, Hugh. I've done my bit. I'm freezing to death here. Will you come back to the ranch for a cup of coffee?"

Hugh did not reply for the moment. Suddenly he found himself curious about what had been going on inside of Jessie's brain. It was the first time he recalled ever having felt this particular curiosity.

"Yes," he said slowly; "I'll go back to the ranch with you. Would you like to mount Fossil while I take the skis?"

"No, thanks. I can keep up with Fossil's trot."

THEY made no attempt at conversation until the ranch was reached. There Hugh left Fossil at the living-room door and followed Jessie into the room.

"Sit down by the fire, Hugh, and I'll tell Li Wing to make us coffee," said Jessie, pulling off her mackinaw.

When she returned, Hugh stared at her.

"Jessie, I know why we drifted apart. We never needed each other."

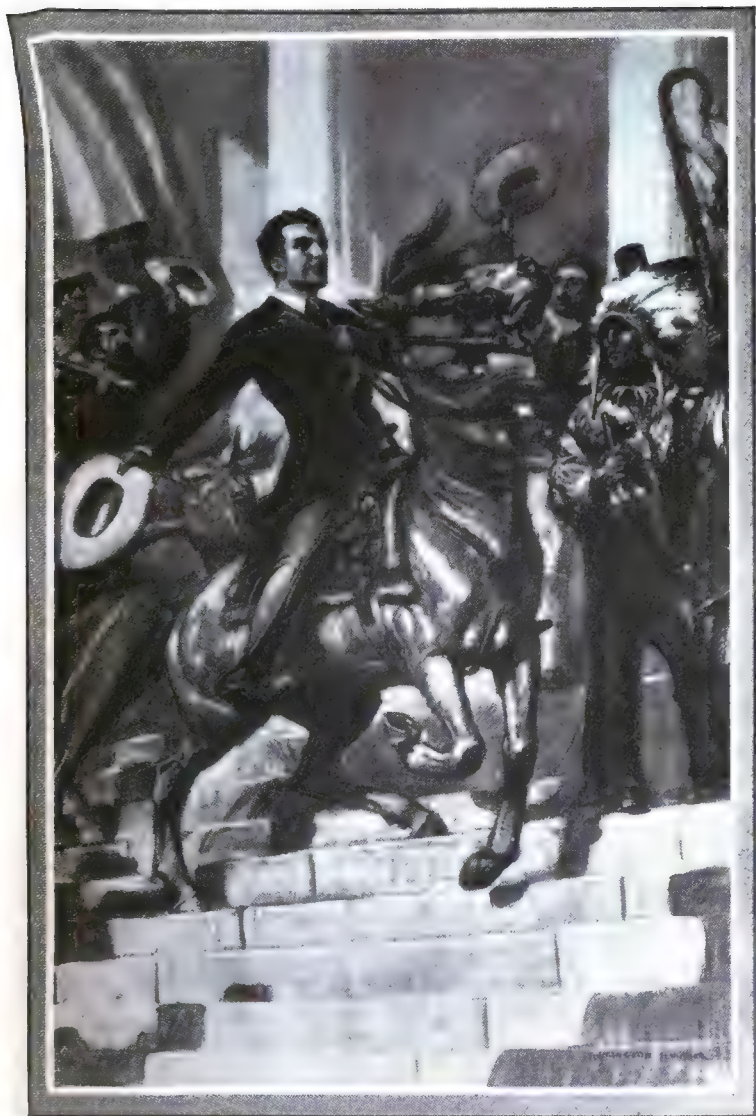
Jessie dropped into the armchair opposite Hugh. She was not beautiful in the sense that Miriam had been beautiful, but surely her vitality, her strength had a loveliness of their own—a loveliness that Hugh felt subconsciously while he concentrated on this new idea concerning their old relationship.

"I'm not sure that we didn't need each other," said Jessie in her deliberate way.

"We were both too selfish and self-centered to understand our own or each other's duties. You talked a lot about opening up the past for future generations to read. You never saw yourself as one of the torch-bearers of life, with a race-obligation to hand the lighted torch on."

Hugh listened intently. When Jessie paused, he said:

"I've realized that, Jess, but only since



Amid the thunder of applause Hugh rode the prancing stallion down the steps.

Christmas. Jessie, let me tell you what happened on Christmas eve. You knew about the baby, of course. But let me give you the whole story."

He leaned forward in his chair. Twilight had fallen, and the glow from the cedar logs lighted his wistful face. He told the story of Dora with a simplicity and tenderness that was almost unbearably moving. Jessie, wide-eyed, hardly daring to breathe lest she mar this first of Hugh's confidences, felt as if she could not bear the poignancy Hugh gave to this other woman's sacrifices. When he had finished the account with the return of Martin and the doctor, he said,

"No man could have gone through that and not have felt differently about his mother and his wife."

Jessie clasped her hands to her breast.

"I never was a real wife to you. I refused motherhood"—with a little sob.

"Yes, Jessie; but I refused fatherhood—totally. I didn't want a baby to interfere with my fossils."

"And so," exclaimed Jessie, "you gave your fossils for the Children's Code?"

"Yes," replied Hugh.

Li Wing came in with a lighted lamp. Hugh, with a start, looked at his watch.

"I've a conference at seven o'clock." He rose, looking down on Jessie half whimsically. "So you won't come up to the inaugural, Jessie?"

Jessie smiled, but shook her head.

"I meant what I said, Hughie. You don't need me. My job is finished."

"Do you need me, Jessie?" asked Hugh, with sudden seriousness.

"Hughie," she said, "it's not my business to answer that question. It's not a question of my demanding, but of your giving, of your seeing and wanting to give. And"—now looking bravely up into his eyes—"I've made up my mind that time will never come, and I'm going to give you your divorce."

"What!" shouted Hugh.

"Of course I'll get it. That's the way it's done."

"But look here, Jessie; I'm not asking for that, am I?"

"You have asked for it before, Hughie. Now it's I that's asking for it. You go along now and think it over."

"But I'm not sure that I want to think it

over. Jessie, are you beginning to care for some other man?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Jessie indignantly. "It's just that I finally understand your feeling toward me."

"Oh, you do, do you?" muttered Hugh. He turned with a curious resentment and jerked himself into his coat. Then, with a puzzled look in his eyes, he gave Jessie a long stare and an abrupt good-by and strode into the night.

He rode home entirely absorbed in renewing this conversation with Jessie, concentrating his thoughts at last on its startling finale. He felt distinctly resentful. If Jessie cared for no one else, he could see no reason why matters should not remain as they were. Anyhow, divorce proceedings now, he told himself, would hurt his prestige as a governor. But he had the grace to laugh at himself for his last thought as he recalled his many repudiations of Mrs. Ellis's warnings along this very line.

PROBABLY no one enjoyed the inauguration more than Johnny Parnell, or less than Hughie. Owing to the irrepressible instinct of the Wyomingite for the picturesque, there was no inconsiderable amount of pomp connected with the day. The high moment was at the close of Hugh's inaugural address. Curiously enough, this never could be read in the archives of the state as a great speech. Yet the vast assemblage that listened to Hugh was fully persuaded that Wyoming had produced at last its great man. It was a situation peculiar to American politics.

Hugh's story was familiar to every one now. Even the tale of the swap of the Sioux Tract for the Children's Code had reached the remotest parts of the state. Here was romance; here was idealism; here was steadfastness and self-sacrifice. Outside of the political rings, they gave not a fig what his politics might be. Here was the man they had clothed in the finest of their dreams. And they were going, by their half-mad enthusiasm, to force him to wear the fabric as his own.

The most picturesque moment of the day occurred when Hugh was leaving the Capitol to attend a function at the governor's mansion. A crowd, half mob, half procession, was waiting to escort him. There were cavalymen, spick and span in

winter uniforms. There were cow-men with chaps and neckerchiefs fluttering. There were Indians in blankets and buckskins, and miners and railroad men in overalls. There were two or three overland stage-coaches loaded with shouting school-children.

One of the Indians, catching sight of Hugh, galloped to the steps, leading a horse on whose back was a beautiful silver-mounted saddle. Reaching the steps, he deliberately forced his horse to mount and the led horse to follow.

"Red Wolf!" cried Hugh. "How are you, old-timer?"

Red Wolf dismounted and shook hands gravely. There was sudden silence in the crowd below.

"Injuns of Wyoming bring the governor greeting," said the Indian.

"Thank you, Red Wolf," returned Hugh.

"What is the extra horse for, Chief?"

"For you. From Red Wolf and Eagle's Wing. The gray stallion."

"The gray stallion? Why, so it is!"

Hugh cast an interested eye toward the listening crowd. Pink, he supposed, was somewhere in the throng.

HIS supposition was entirely correct. There was a commotion at the bottom of the steps, and Pink, pursued by Fred Allward in a miner's garb, puffed up the steps. He made a lunge at the Indian. Red Wolf did not move a muscle. Hugh caught Pink by the throat and forced him to stand quietly before him.

"Don't you dare to start anything here, Pink!" he said.

"Go on, Governor!" cried a voice from the crowd. "You don't need to be afraid of anything he can say."

"He sure is afraid!" called some one else. "Pink has a grudge because Stewart's his son-in-law and don't live with his wife."

Hisses drowned the voice. Red Wolf looked contemptuously at Pink.

"Let 'em speak, Hughie," said the Indian. "He no can hurt you or me."

Hugh slowly released his hold on his father-in-law's throat. Pink straightened himself, rubbed his throat and turned toward the now altogether enthralled crowd.

"I ain't a public speaker!" exclaimed Pink. "But I guess I can prove to you that that stallion is mine."

"Is it the real, original gray stallion?" asked somebody.

"Yes, it is," replied Pink. "I found it running the plains last spring. It was a wild horse. I brought it in and put it in my corral. That same night it disappeared. Either the governor or this Injun's son had taken it."

"That's a heap lie!" exclaimed Red Wolf. "Stallion in Billy Chamberlain's old adobe three days. Then my boy he follow Pink while Pink he take 'em stallion one night up to old stone-devil's cave. He wait long time to see what Pink do there. My boy afraid go in stone-devil's cave. Pink get away with stallion; my son lose 'em."

"That's a lie!" roared Pink.

"Shut up, Pink, and let the Injun finish!" said several voices.

"What made you think the stallion was yours, Red Wolf? Tell the crowd!" cried Fred Allward.

"I rope 'em up in wild-horse country beyond Big Fang. I bring 'em down. I met Hughie. He help me. Down by bridge they drink, all my wild horses, about one hundred and forty. Fred Allward he learning run air-plane; he sent air-plane into my wild horses. Kill heap many. Stampede rest. Hughie he have fight with gray stallion, rope 'em, tie 'em to bridge, tell Pink Morgan take care of 'em."

"That's right!" shouted Fred Allward.

The crowd roared and applauded.

"Look's like this was a foolish move on your part, Pink," grinned Fred.

Pink stood, the picture of fat martyrdom, until the applause died down. Then he said firmly:

"I found that horse, a wild horse, running free on the flats across from Fort Sioux. I took him up to my ranch and broke him. A week ago this Injun came up there and attacked me and *scalped me!*"

A gasp went through the audience. All its restless, colorful movement was stilled, as Pink took off his cap and, wincing as he did so, tore away the bandage on the top of his head. The wound was like a dull-red disk.

Indian hate still lives in our frontier states. Pink Morgan was more or less of a joke, but the scalp-mark on his head brought tragedy to the memory of every pioneer who saw it.

A murmur rose. Hugh looked quickly

at Red Wolf. The old chief stood silent. "You'd better go, Red Wolf," Hugh said to him quietly. "Ride your horse straight through the Capitol to the rear door."

Red Wolf grunted.

"No will do." He shot a bronze palm upward and outward, a gesture of such power and dignity that the murmur ceased. "Red Wolf he took the scalp-lock," he said in a voice that carried to the outer edge of the crowd when the school-children in the yellow stage-coaches hung from the windows in precarious attitudes of absorbed attention. "Red Wolf he took scalp-lock. Pink long ago take my ranch. Pink he smash up stone devil belong Hughie here. Hughie he my friend, best friend. Pink he hurt Hughie here"—laying a bronze hand on Hughie's heart. "Hughie he never lie, he never break promise. Pink he heap crooked. Red Wolf he take scalp-lock."

He paused, and for a full moment there was silence, with the brilliant winter sunlight glowing over the crowd.

Pink broke the silence.

"Well, do I get the stallion or don't I? Do I get this Injun jailed or don't I?"

"You'll get neither," said Hugh in a voice that carried to the outer edge of the audience. "Red Wolf keeps the stallion. Indian or no Indian, he's a thoroughbred. Am I not right?"—appealing with a smile to the listening throng.

Johnny Parnell, in the whitest Angora chaps and the most vivid blue handkerchief ever seen in Cheyenne, jingled up the steps.

"Look here, folks; looks like Pink had made you jury on this case. I want to tell you that I know personally that any word the Sioux says is true. The reason I know is that for a little while I played round with Pink Morgan at the game he was putting over—till I saw a great light and undertook to help make this man's man, the governor. Now, my advice to Pink is: don't start anything with Hugh Stewart. He ain't a nice boy when he gets mad. The Eastern Electric Corporation got him mad, and he stopped digging fossils long enough to make himself governor so's he could tend to their case properly.

"Hughie Stewart thought more of that Old Sioux Tract than he did of anything else on earth. He gave up more than any of you imagine to save it for a national

fossil-field. And yet, when he got out of his bone-yards into human living and found out what the Children's Code meant, he told Charlie Whitom he could have the Thumb Butte site if he'd give Wyoming the code. And that's the man this here little Pink Morgan has tried to injure!"

A roar went up from the crowd. Johnny shook his head and the crowd caught breath and listened. Johnny went on:

"I have a suggestion. Pink values that scalp-lock awful high. As you see, he ain't got any hair to spare. So I say—let Red Wolf return that scalp-lock and let Hughie keep the gray stallion and let Pink be thankful I ain't told everything I know about him and me."

For the first time during the scene Red Wolf's sense of humor gleamed in his eyes. While the audience rocked with laughter he detached from his belt a tiny lock of hair and handed it to Johnny. Johnny, with a broad grin, offered it to Pink, and Pink suddenly bolted into the building.

"Mount the gray stallion, Governor!" shouted a voice.

Hugh turned an inquiring eye on Red Wolf, who nodded and said, his eyes still twinkling,

"Pink he broke him heap good."

Hugh sprang into the saddle, and amid the thunder of applause rode the prancing stallion down the steps. And the much belated parade began.

THE day dragged on for Hugh through function after function.

At every moment when something more formal was not being pressed upon him the politicians of both parties were waiting on him with requests for a share in the spoils. These requests bewildered and puzzled Hugh. The day was not half done when he sent for Mrs. Ellis.

"Mrs. Ellis," he asked, "am I under obligations to everybody in the state? Isn't there any one with whom I break even?"

The mother of the code chuckled.

"You owe nothing. You went in absolutely without obligations except as to the Sioux Tract and the Children's Code. You've canceled those debts. If I were you I'd give nothing to any one until you have been in office long enough to know what you want for Wyoming."

"Then I'll see no more of them to-day."

"Except Charlie Whitom. I promised him I'd arrange for you to see him before the ball to-night."

"What does he want?" asked Hugh.

"I don't know. But we'll need him for the code."

"You're more loyal to the code than I've been to my dinosaurs." Hugh smiled.

Mrs. Ellis laid a plump hand on his arm.

"You've helped me to be so, my dear. I shall never forget it. Here comes Johnny. I'm sorry for you, Hughie." She laughed and slipped away.

LONELY and sad the day was—yes; and yet Hugh arrived at the governor's mansion for the hour's rest permitted him by the ferocious Johnny with a curious feeling of satisfaction. There was something gratifying in realizing that the people of Wyoming believed he would lead them into that nebulous, elusive finer life that the lowliest and the worst of us longs for and seldom achieves. Only in certain restricted directions could Hugh open a trail for them, he knew. But, he told himself after the day of adulation, he would take a keen pride in doing all that lay within him. Johnny, Mrs. Ellis and Principal Jones were waiting for him in the drawing-room.

Johnny was apparently more interested in the return of the gray stallion than in any other event of the day.

"If I'd tried to stage anything like that, it sure would have failed," he said, taking a turn up and down the room. "It was the big hit of the day—after your speech, Governor. But, say—Pink is some mad cow-man. Everybody has hazed him to-day. Poor old fat man! Mrs. Morgan and Jessie both have turned against him and the Sioux Injun has stolen back the gray stallion!"

"Pink has turned mean." Principal Jones laid down a report of Hugh's speech in the evening paper.

"He's harmless," grunted Hugh.

"Harmless?" Mrs. Ellis raised her eyebrows. "Strikes me he was the little slide that finally started the whole avalanche. He'll still bear watching."

Before Hugh could reply the door-man announced a visitor, and old Charlie Whitom came in, accompanied by Charles Grafton, the representative of the Eastern Electric Corporation. Whitom was exceedingly businesslike.

"Just two points, Governor, that I want to settle at once. First, that speech of yours to-day and the reception it got. That means just one thing, sir: You are booked for Washington."

Hugh rose.

"No!"

Whitom smiled.

"Yes, your Excellency."

"Mr. Whitom," exclaimed Mrs. Ellis, "really, I don't see where you come in on this!"

"Mrs. Ellis"—Whitom smiled—"I come in on the Children's Code, and also, thanks to the governor, on the Thumb Butte dam." He suddenly grew serious. "Madam, I have hungered all my life for Wyoming to produce a national possibility. By God, this state is going to ride into Washington on a gray stallion!"

"Mrs. Ellis is the big figure in Wyoming." Hugh's low voice was arresting. "Don't mistake some trick of personality of which I seem to be the unfortunate possessor for anything but what it is."

"Mrs. Ellis could do nothing with the Children's Code until you came into the running," said Whitom brusquely.

Hugh stood thoughtfully in the middle of the room. He didn't know what Whitom might have in mind. He didn't care.

"I've been valuable to Wyoming," he said, "because of a peculiar set of circumstances. When I've settled the problems connected with these, I want to return to private life."

"You haven't a chance in the world," grunted Whitom. "I have come to you to-night to tell you that. And to tell you that I would be glad to whip the Children's Code through both houses for you. In short, I am asking to climb aboard the band-wagon."

Suddenly Hugh began to laugh. Mrs. Ellis joined him. Johnny Parnell let out a great roar. A moment later every one in the room was rocking with amusement.

Mrs. Ellis was the first to recover.

"If the governor will permit me," she said, "I'll accept your offer, Mr. Whitom."

"The governor," chuckled Hugh, "is only too glad to give up a job he knows nothing about. Mr. Grafton, what can I do for you?"

Grafton, who had been a deeply interested spectator, bowed formally.

"Governor, we are going to begin work on the dam at once. Next week we set off the first blast. So much history has been written round Thumb Butte that we want to make a real occasion of beginning the work. We want you to come to Fort Sioux and press the electric button that sets off that first blast."

There was a moment's silence. Then Hugh said abruptly,

"Where will that first blast be set?"

"In the cave across the river from the butte. The sandstone within the cave is one of the best unweathered points on which we can tie concrete."

Silence again, with all eyes on Hugh. He stood, tall and slender, his tired eyes looking beyond the luxurious room, beyond the city in its holiday trappings, beyond the snow-swept plains to the cave—the cave where Bookie had left the body of Jimmy Duncan, where he had passed the most perfect hours of his working-life, where he had taken Miriam into the secret place of his ambitions, and it was the burial-place of the great triceratops.

A seemingly small and not unusual thing to ask of the governor of a state. Yet all Hugh's nature rose in revolt against granting the request. And yet again, so violent was his feeling that he dared not refuse. He had a sudden realization that this moment was the ultimate acid test of the sincerity of his decision made only a week before in the dinosaur cave. He walked to the window and slowly returned to Grafton. His face was deep-lined, but his voice firm.

"Very well, Mr. Grafton. Let Parnell know the details." Then he turned to Whitom. "Will you excuse me from any further discussion just now, Whitom?"

"Sure! I guess I've gone on record clearly enough to offset any other siren-calls you may hear to-night. I'll see you all later at the ball. All set, Grafton?"

Grafton shook hands with Hugh and followed Whitom out of the room. Hugh turned to his three friends.

"Do you all think I must go on and on with this?"—waving his hand at the rich trappings of the room. "Do you think that the gray stallion, bred on the plains, would be anything but a saddle-horse for some one else to ride in Washington?" He stopped, with a look of bitterness that moved them all.

Mrs. Ellis cleared her throat.

"I think we all agree, Hughie, that your days as a private citizen are over."

Hugh looked from one to another.

"Can't any of you understand how I feel?"

Johnny Parnell answered huskily, but with the same sense that the situation must be met squarely.

"Not fully, I'm afraid, Governor."

Hugh stared at the group, then said,

"If you'll all excuse me I'll go to my room to dress for the party."

But in his room he did not begin at once on his toilet. He paced the floor for some moments. Then he went to the telephone and put in a long-distance call. He had finished dressing when the operator called him to the instrument.

"Is this you, Jessie?"

"Yes, Hughie."

"Jessie, something that you said in our last talk together has given me courage to ask you to do something for me. Will you come up to Cheyenne as quickly as you can and let me ask you some questions?"

"Yes, Hughie. You are not in trouble, are you?"

"I'm not in trouble, but, Jessie, I'm deeply troubled. I'm not sure that you can help me. I'm very sure that I have no right to bother you."

"I'll be along, Hughie. Perhaps I can catch the flier."

Hugh heard her receiver click. He hung up his own instrument and went down-stairs to join the others.

SIX hours later Hugh was standing in the ballroom, listening, with an absent eye, to an eager lady who wanted to be made commissioner of Education, when an attendant whispered to him,

"Mrs. Stewart is in the little reception-room behind you, Governor."

Hugh abruptly excused himself to the importunate voter and strode into the little room, closing and locking the door behind him. Jessie was standing under the chandelier in her beaver coat and hat, a little pale, violet eyes steady.

"Take off your wraps, Jessie," said Hugh. He dropped her coat on a chair, then stood before her. "Jessie, do you know that they want to get me into national politics?" Jessie nodded. "And did you

know that they were to ask me to touch off the dynamite that next week will destroy the dinosaur cave?"

"No!"—quickly. "I didn't know that. Of course it's impossible."

"Impossible?" repeated Hugh. "But I've consented. I dared not refuse."

Suddenly Jessie's wide eyes deepened with tears.

"Oh, no, Hughie; not that! You mustn't demand that of yourself." Hugh stared at her as though he would probe to her very soul. But he did not speak, and Jessie went on: "Not that! Give them the Children's Code. Give them whatever you peculiarly can give them. Then go back to your dinosaurs."

"That, Jessie!" gasped Hugh. "That—from you!"

But Jessie was not heeding him.

"You have crucified yourself enough for all of us—Uncle Bookie, mother, Mrs. Ellis, Johnny Parnell. They are an ambitious crowd, and they set no limits. They love you, but they have no idea of what it's costing you. Give them this term, Hughie, then go back to your marvelous past." She paused, but Hugh could not phrase what welled up within him. She misinterpreted his silence, and lifted her coat. "If I've answered all your questions, Hughie, I'll be going. I must be back at the ranch to-morrow."

Hugh took the coat from her and again tossed it to the chair.

"Jessie! Jessie! For God's sake give me truth—utter and absolute! Why, after all the years of contempt for my work, do you answer me so?"

Very white now, Jessie returned his look.

"Because," she replied carefully, "I have suffered for two years as only a woman who can love as I can is able to suffer. Because, suffering so, I made myself learn where it was I had failed. Part of my way of learning was to get your point of view about your work. Once I got it, I realized how I had tortured you, how I had deliberately turned you to Miriam Page. I tried to take my medicine standing. You must do for Wyoming whatever you alone can do. At all other times keep to your own work."

Again she lifted her coat. Hugh put a restraining hand on her shoulder.

"Wait, Jessie! Do you know that in all my world you are the only one that would

answer me so? And do you know that, in spite of the people who have broken faith with me, I believe that you believe what you say? You always have been an absolutely honest human being."

"Yes," said Jessie slowly; "I have been that at least."

"Do you know what your attitude means to me? Look, Jessie! I am down to bed-rock. All the superstructure of my life has been swept away. All my old feeling about people, all my old contacts with them, all my old philosophy of life gone! Bookie, Miriam, Mrs. Ellis, Johnny, with their one inescapable demand on me! A demand to which I responded. But the loneliness of it! The bleakness of it! I can't stick it without some one to understand." He moistened his lips and went on: "Jessie, I, too, have suffered. Thank heaven, I don't have to tell you. You know. It was my work that separated us. Will you let it be my work that brings us together again—your faith in it and its import? In all the world, only you. Jessie, I am swept clean. All I have to offer you is my admiration for what you've grown to be and my complete trust in you and my terrible spiritual need of your sympathy. If this seems to you too selfish, let it go. But if in the bigness of your nature you can take me in as you would a lonely little boy who—who is trying to adjust himself to his first terrible awakening to what life really is——"

HUGH'S voice broke. Jessie's eyes deepened to a tenderness that lifted her whole face to extraordinary beauty. For a moment she stood thus. Then, her very lips white, she slowly shook her head.

"No, Hughie. I learn slowly. But I learn surely. I dare not come back to you, caring for you as I do, unless I can believe that love is dawning within you. I had thought that if only you would take me into your arms again I could win you. I don't want to win you, I know now, Hughie. I can't be satisfied with you merely needing me. You must love me."

"Jessie! Jessie! Do you mean that you will go on with the application for divorce?"

"It's fair; isn't it, Hughie?"

"Fair! Great heavens, yes! I'm not asking fairness of you. That would give me nothing. Look, Jessie; I'm not deceived

by the sort of adulation I've been receiving lately. I know how weak, how one-sided I am. And so do you. I don't see how you can love me as you do and know my weaknesses and, knowing them, can love me. Doesn't that mean something to you?"

Jessie threw her coat over her arm now and walked firmly to the door. There she stood for a moment, head bowed, Hugh watching her with his whole soul concentrated on the effort to read her mind. But he could not know what force it was within her that caused her to raise her head and say to him:

"Let's end it, Hughie. You don't know what love is. You never will until you can forget yourself. Perhaps it's not in you to know the big thing. That's not strange. It comes to few people."

She unlocked the door and went away.

THAT night, when the new governor of the state went to bed, he might well have been thinking of the really great day he had just gone through. A man of any other temperament than Hugh's might well have felt that he, and not the day, was great. But Hugh lay for the long hour before sleep released him, pondering over Jessie's last statement. He wondered if she were right.

Surely he once had loved Jessie. Surely the love he had had for Miriam was deep and sincere. Yes; Jessie herself had granted both those facts. What did she mean by "great love"?

Staring into the darkness, Hugh acknowledged to himself that he did not know. Perhaps, as Jessie suggested, it was not within him to know. What was the acid test? What was the touchstone? Self-forgetfulness, Jessie had said.

What was there left to sacrifice? He had stripped himself to the very foundations of his nature, he told himself, for Bookie, for Mrs. Ellis, for Wyoming. What had he sacrificed for love? Nothing. Nothing to Jessie. Nothing to Miriam.

Hugh tossed his arms above his head and groaned. Why pursue the struggle? He had nothing left to give. If he were not to know the great thing of which Jessie spoke so surely and so yearningly, he could go on without it, living as best he might from day to day, alone.

Alone. Aye! There was the point that

probed deepest. Hugh knew now that he was not of the stuff that could live on alone, stripped of his profession and of the fulfillment of that racial yearning that had been slowly rousing in him during the year's struggle with the Children's Code. He must have one or the other.

Forgetfulness of self, Jessie had said. And here he lay, his whole mind turned passionately inward. Self! Self! God help him, he would forget himself henceforward! And with what infinite pleasure could he leave behind that restless, yearning, flagellating entity he knew as self! He would throw himself completely into the new duties. With this determination, he fell asleep.

A week later Johnny Parnell, smoking a meditative cigarette in the governor's private office, while he watched Hugh sign letters, said in what he considered was a confidential tone,

"Governor, what are we going to do with Pink?"

"Pink? What's he up to now, Johnny?"

"Oh, he's hanging round Cheyenne, talking. We've got to shut his gab, if for no other reason than he's Jessie's father. And while I ain't what you'd call fond of Mrs. Morgan as a model of what the novels call a 'delectable female,' still, I've got an awful lot of respect for her as a politician. It ain't right, after the big game she played for us, to let him go on sort of making himself the laughing-stock of the state."

"I agree with you, Johnny. What is the old fool's idea?"

"I don't know as he has one, Hughie. He's drinking a lot. But he's got something worse the matter with him than alcohol. I think he's gone a little loco—just enough to make him dangerous."

"Dangerous! Look here, old-timer; I've known Pink ever since I was born. He isn't dangerous to any one but himself."

"He tried to shoot old Red Wolf."

"Yes; and he certainly got punished for it." Hugh began to chuckle as he again recalled Fred's story of the now famous battle of the scalp-lock.

Johnny's guffaw shook the windows, but he sobered quickly to say,

"Hughie we've got to hobble him somehow."

"I'm waiting for you to tell me just what he's up to, Johnny." Hugh rose to light

his pipe and lean against the window-frame in the attitude familiar in *The Lariat*.

"Well, according to all that's told me—and I'm getting it straight enough—he's turned chiefly against Jessie. He merely says of you that he'll get you some day."

"Oh, well," grunted Hugh, "that's the least of my troubles. I was brought up with so-called bad men. They are all cowards."

"Yes; they sure are, and a coward's always dangerous. Because you can't count on 'em. I'd rather ride a horse that'll tackle any jump in sight than one that shies at a leaf on the trail. One's only foolish; the other one will throw you when you least expect it."

Hugh nodded, then said, with an unexpected grimness of tone,

"What's he got against Jessie?"

Johnny's good-natured face stiffened.

"I don't like to talk about the hound; I hate him so."

"Hate him! Why, Johnny, you don't know what hate is. When you consider what that dirty mud-puppy has done to me in the last two years, you may begin to realize what I feel toward him. He's—he's something unclean in my life." There was a pause. Then Hugh cleared his throat and repeated, "What's he got against Jessie?"

"Some of the bums that hang round Mexico Pete's pool-room gave him a jab about Jessie's not divorcing you because of your affair with Miriam Page."

"Affair!" ejaculated Hugh. "Wait a moment, Johnny! That was not an 'affair,' as one ordinarily uses that phrase."

Johnny's eyes widened. He said rather pleadingly:

"Look here, Governor; as I look at it, that's all over and done with. We may have to do a little mopping-up because of it, but let's you and me never discuss the right and wrong of it."

"I don't intend to. I sha'n't even mention it to any one but you, but you are my friend. Jessie had no grounds for divorce." He looked Johnny clearly in the eye.

Johnny returned the look. Then he said:

"Well, there ain't any other man in the world whose word I'd take. But I believe you, old-timer. You know, though—don't you?—that I'm the only person in the state that would believe you."

"Jessie and Mrs. Ellis know," contradicted Hugh. "Go on with your story."

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"Well, when Pink got this jab he began to clear his skirts by telling a wild story. He said, when he found out about Miss Page, he knocked you down and that Jessie interfered and took your side. And he said he tried again and again to get Jessie to leave you, but that she's hung on your neck, no matter what you've done to her. That was his first story, the night of the ball. He's been drunk most of the time since and, naturally, the story has grown."

"Grown to what?" asked Hugh grimly.

"I don't know for sure. I heard so many rumors that I told Fred Allward to have a talk with Mexico Pete. Fred didn't turn up this morning, but I thought I had enough facts to go ahead on."

"I should judge so," agreed Hugh, with a hard gleam in his deep-set eyes. "I suppose you have a suggestion to make."

"Yes, I have. We can't kill him, seeing what your position is. We'll have to buy him. Give him what he wants."

"I told you that I hated him!" exclaimed Hugh. "I don't know what he wants, but I wouldn't give it to him to save his life."

"But we ain't talking about your feelings," said Johnny laconically, "nor about mine. We're talking about Jessie."

Hugh flushed painfully. Self again! Even Johnny felt it.

"I guess I deserved that, Johnny," he said. "Nevertheless, I don't see what your idea is."

"I mean you can't punish him because he's your father-in-law. Give him his horse-ranch. Bribe him."

"But he has his horse-ranch."

"No, he hasn't. The Mormons have it. He borrowed from them while he was waiting for these here sure-fire payments from the Eastern Electric Corporation. And as it was a private arrangement between him and Miriam Page, it isn't ever coming through. Grafton just laughs at him."

Hugh stared at Johnny for so long that that much tried cow-man was greatly relieved when the governor's secretary announced Fred Allward.

TO SAY that Fred strutted would be unfair. But the little miner certainly had adopted an air of conscious power that sat with remarkable effect upon him. He wore a celluloid collar above a blue-flannel shirt and a black suit that he had bought in

service twenty-five years before. It had traveled many miles in his bedding-roll, had been worn but a scant dozen times, and was still in good condition, as he pointed out to Johnny, who complained that the suit lacked a certain style.

"Sorry I missed you, Johnny," said Fred, after greeting Hugh. "Did you want I should come here and report?"

"Yes; if it's all right with the governor," replied Johnny.

"Yes; let's get through with it!" exclaimed Hugh.

"I had a talk with Mexico Pete. He says he can keep Pink out of his place, but what's the use? He'd just hang out somewhere else. And Pete says he is a drawing card because he's related to the governor."

"Did Pete's story check up with what you had?" asked Johnny.

"Well, you see, it's kind of worse. Those bums at Pete's they think it's fun to roast him, and last night he said Jess she wasn't his daughter at all. Belonged to Mrs. Morgan. No daughter of his could follow a man that had done what Hughie's done."

"God knows I wish she wasn't his daughter!" shouted Johnny, jumping to his feet. "It's no use. I've got to go and kill that hound!"

Hugh put his hand on Johnny's arm.

"Wait, Johnny; wait!"

"I ain't going to wait. I love Jessie Morgan in the way a cold-blooded guy like you can't dream of."

"She's my wife, Parnell," said Hugh, wondering, with a sudden deep pang, how soon Jessie would begin divorce proceedings.

"Lots of good that's done her! Let go of me, Hughie!" cried Johnny.

"Wait!" thundered Hugh.

Johnny sulkily subsided.

"You should let me tend to Pink," he muttered, "and you should bring Jessie here to live."

"Don't you suppose I've tried to get her to come?" demanded Hugh.

"And she refused?"

"Yes, she did."

"Well, I pass!" groaned Johnny.

Hugh walked back and forth for a moment. Then he said:

"Can Pink be frightened into keeping his mouth shut until I've given this matter a few days' thought. I'm too angry now to make plans. I'll not bribe him, Johnny."

"Mrs. Morgan can make him shut up," assured Fred.

"Good heavens, Fred, I don't want her to have a word of this if we can help it!" exclaimed Hugh.

"All right. If you're so finicky, I'll take care of him for a few days. Me and Red Wolf will take him prospecting or some such. How long do you want, Governor?"

"Only till Saturday. Then deliver him to me here. And the Lord give me strength to keep my hands off him! You fellows will have to get out now and leave me to the rest of my appointments."

And shortly Hugh, with a curious uneasiness in the background of his mind, was immersed in the day's heavy business.

MRS. ELLIS came in late in the afternoon. She was looking troubled.

"Hughie, Charlie Whitom has just been with me. I don't know who is at work, but he is convinced that you are not acting in good faith about the Thumb Butte-Children's Code deal. He acknowledged that the deeds have been drawn for the sale to the Eastern Electric Corporation, but he says the air is full of rumors about one crowd double-crossing them, that you won't appear to fire the blast at the opening ceremonies on Friday, that the property isn't yours to deliver, and that Jessie is working up some sort of a spectacular injunction proceeding and a lot more things that I told him a man of his experience ought to be ashamed to repeat."

Hugh laid down his pen in deep exasperation.

"How can he be such a fool? There is no way I could double-cross him even if I wanted to."

Mrs. Ellis smiled.

"Oh, there are ways, as he very well knows. Only, knowing you, he ought to realize they'll never be used. The only thing that bothers me is the fear that at the last moment your resolution will fail you and you won't appear to fire that blast on Friday, Hughie. A whole mountain of political consequences rests on that very simple request of Grafton's. It's your final evidence that you and Whitom are doing team-work. It's—oh, it's all sorts of things that I can't bother you about."

"I'll be there," said Hugh.

Mrs. Ellis gave a sigh of relief.

"Whitom is a fool," she said and went out.

Hugh went down to Fort Sioux on Thursday afternoon. He wanted to sleep in The Lariat. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to go quietly to the dinosaur cave, if that were possible, and say good-by to it before the blast was set. And he wanted to see Jessie. But he had resolved not to do so.

The ceremonies were set for noon on Friday. Fossil had not been sent to Cheyenne as yet. Hugh gave Thursday afternoon and early evening to his solitary ride up to the cave. A good trail had been worked out clean from the river to the plains above the cave. Men were at work on it still. A watchman allowed Hugh to enter.

Hugh was alone in the dim interior for a long hour. When he came out his quiet face gave no indication to the curious eyes of the watchman as to what he may have seen or thought during that period.

"I suppose you knew them old walls pretty well, Governor," the watchman remarked. "Folks tell lots of stories about how fond you was of that stone bird you got out of here."

"I was pretty fond of it," agreed Hugh.

"Kind of tough having to blow her up yourself." The man spoke with a sudden sympathy as he warmed toward the subtle thing in Hugh that drew men.

Hugh smiled at the watchman.

"Thanks, old man! But I guess we'll have to put her through."

"Sure we'll put her through! Twelve o'clock sharp to-morrow."

"Twelve o'clock," repeated Hugh. "I'll be here. Good-by, old man."

"Good-by, Governor! Kind of tough, by heck!" And he shook his head as Hugh started down the trail.

He slept alone that night in The Lariat, his mind full of half-tender, half-whimsical memories of Uncle Bookie, forcing himself to forget the many hard hours of his exile within these familiar walls. The river roared its old ferocious song without the window. The little stove showed a sleepless red eye that was the very acme of comfort. And Hugh slept from midnight to early dawn without a dream.

AT DAWN Hugh was wakened by a creaking of the rear window. He did not move as the bulky form of Pink Morgan appeared dimly over the sill. He heaved

himself awkwardly into the room, swayed for a second, then fell to the floor. Pink was very drunk.

Hugh got up, closed the window and dressed himself while Pink lay watching him, a look of hate growing more and more apparent in his bleared eyes as dawn glorified the room.

When Hugh had finished his toilet, which he did always with a watchful eye on his visitor, he said,

"Pink, where are Red Wolf and Fred?"

"Thought you had me, didn't you?" said Pink thickly. "I got 'em both, and now I'm going to get you, you blank! Just as soon as my head clears up. I'm drunk—God-awful drunk. I'm drunk all the time now. It makes me smart and nervy."

"So I see," agreed Hugh. With a sudden deft movement he jerked the gun out of Pink's belt and dropped it into his own pocket.

Pink rolled heavily to his knees; then, with unexpected quickness, he hurled against Hugh and caught him round the neck.

"I'll get you anyhow, you ——" He called Hugh by an unrepeatable name.

Hugh would have killed him had not the thought of Jessie been burning in his mind. He fought a desperate battle with the drunken man, but he did not draw the gun. He was all but exhausted when finally Pink lay again on the floor, this time with a twist of Bookie's lariat round his ankles and wrists.

Hugh, panting, crouched over him.

"I'd kill you if it wasn't for Jessie," he muttered.

"Jessie!" sneered Pink. "You'd ought to been with Jessie last night, like a regular husband. She's no girl of mine. So I fixed her, too!"

Hugh started for the telephone.

"Cut her wires last night. Yours this morning. Told you I was smart when I was drunk. Nervy, too."

There was no response to Hugh's anxious calls. He returned to Pink, red spots beginning to dance before his eyes.

"What did you do to Jessie, you hound?" he panted.

"What business is it of yours? You ain't been her husband for years. I fixed it so she won't hang round your neck no more."

Hugh jerked out the gun, stood for a

moment, hesitating, while the ugly leer in Pink's eyes never wavered. Then he dropped the weapon back in his pocket, his jaw long and white. He stooped and trussed Pink up with the lariat till he roared with pain; then, jerking on his overcoat and cap, he ran for the corral. There he met Martin, who was now taking Pink's place in the management of the hotel.

"How long would it take you to tune up the *Dinosaur*?" demanded Hugh.

"Oh, two or three hours," returned Martin.

"Help me saddle Fossil, then. Pink's over in The Lariat. Tied up. He's drunk. Attacked me. I've got his gun. Told me he'd got Fred and Red Wolf. And last night, he said, he got Jessie. I'm going up to the ranch. She was there as far as you know, last night? And alone?"

"Yes, she 'phoned me last night about eight. Was O. K. then. But not alone. Li Wing was there. Everybody else is in town for the opening ceremonies. Better let me call some one else, and I'll go with you, Governor."

"No. I don't want a word of this to get out if it can be helped. Jessie has been humiliated enough. I'm going up there. You keep Pink in The Lariat. Set Doc Olson at work on him and see if you can get details about Red Wolf and Fred. But let no one else see him."

"Yes, Governor," said Martin, his voice troubled.

"You're sure she didn't come in last night?" urged Hugh.

"Positive. I was up till after midnight."

Hugh threw himself into the saddle.

ONCE more the glory of the winter trail across the plains. It had not snowed for several days, and there were many tracks going to and from the ranch. Hugh made no attempt to decipher Pink's from among them.

The red spots still danced before Hugh's eyes. If Pink had harmed Jessie! Why, good God, Jessie was his *wife*! It was to her that the splendor of his boy's first love had gone. He recalled now with thrilling vividness the madness and the joy of those first few years of his marriage. Jessie!

No one must hurt her. She had been hurt enough. What could Pink have done? Surely, surely the vague horror that was

shaping within him would have no proof in fact. Pink could not, would not have tried to shoot her.

But Pink was drunk, shockingly drunk. His drunkenness had been accumulating for days. He was potentially a madman.

Hugh twisted his gloved hands together.

Jessie! Indolent, care-free, indifferent no longer. Jessie the strong, the self-denying; Jessie the great lover. Why, to compare himself or Miriam to the human being Jessie had grown to be was to compare the foothills round Cheyenne to the crest of Big Fang. Hugh knew this now—now that it might be too late. The horror thickened in his heart.

That was the longest ride Hugh ever had taken, although when he reached the ranch door it was only mid-morning and Fossil's fore shoulders were trembling from over-exertion. Li Wing came to the door, blinking in the sunshine.

"Where's Mrs. Stewart, Li Wing?" cried Hugh.

"She went Folt Sioux last night, 'bout half-past eight."

"Let me use the telephone, will you?" asked Hugh, throwing himself from his horse.

"Telephone him blusted. Look all same wiles cut last night."

"Did you see Mrs. Stewart go, Li Wing?"

The old Chinaman's face began to pucker with anxiety.

"She came down; Li Wing in bed. Going in Folt Sioux, she say. That light aftel Li Wing go bed. What mlatta, boss?"

"She's not in Fort Sioux, Li Wing," Hugh hesitated. But Li Wing had been Bookie's cook in the old, blessed days. "Her father tackled me this morning. He's very drunk. He said he'd fixed Mrs. Stewart up here. He said he'd cut the telephone-wires." The old Chinaman threw up his withered hands. "Is Magpie in the stable, Li Wing?" asked Hugh.

"Yes! Yes! But him lame. She lide other pony."

Li Wing shuffled toward the corral, Hugh following. Li Wing stood beside the gate for a moment, examining the horses munching alfalfa in the enclosure. "Jacklabbit he gone!"

"You mean that white mare with the long ears?"

"Yes! Yes! Mlissis she lide Jacklabbit."

Hugh slowly made a wide circle of the corral. On the far side, the south side of the fence, he made a discovery. A single fresh horse-track led up to the fence. A little to the right two horse-tracks led back. Hugh returned grimly to the shivering Chinaman.

"You unsaddle Fossil. I'll take that dapple-gray over there and follow those tracks."

The saddle was transferred with marvelous speed, and Hugh galloped out across the field where the two trails led toward a distant cedar grove. As he neared this grove Hugh saw a white horse emerge from the blue-green background and trot sedately toward him. The saddle was empty. Hugh's heart thumped heavily against his ribs. He roped Jackrabbit as he came up. A red scarf of Jessie's was knotted round one stirrup. Hugh dug the spurs into the dapple-gray and, leading Jackrabbit, plunged on into the grove.

HERE there was little snow, but the heavy growth of trees made the going slow and the tracks of the horses difficult to follow. But there was not far to go. Not ten minutes after he entered the grove, Hugh saw Jessie huddled against a tree-trunk. He threw himself from his horse.

"Jessie!"

"Where on earth did you come from, Hughie?" She smiled up at him.

"What did he do to you? Where are you hurt? How did he get away from you?" Hugh was kneeling beside her now, clasping her shoulders.

"It was only a poor old sheep-herder with the pneumonia. About five miles up the valley. His boy came after me last night just as I was starting for Fort Sioux. He died at dawn, poor soul! That fool of a Jackrabbit bolted from a wolverene in here an hour ago and brushed me out of the saddle. My ankle is sprained so I couldn't mount again. But where did you come from Hughie? Why aren't you at the ceremonies?"

Hugh's beautiful mouth was quivering.

"Jessie, your father attacked me this morning in The Lariat. He made me think he'd hurt you—or killed you. And I came as fast as I could. I've failed you—so often, Jessie. But this time I came as fast as I could."

Jessie looked wonderingly into his tense face—looked at his quivering lips.

"'Like a little boy,'" she quoted suddenly. "Oh, Hughie, you came to me before, and I turned away from you! God forgive me, I didn't understand that your love for me would be so 'like a little boy' who craves without understanding."

She lifted his shaking hands from her shoulders to clasp them round her neck.

"I thought he had killed you, Jessie," Hugh went on. "If he had hurt as much as a hair of your head I would have shot him if he were a thousand times your father!"

Jessie, tears brimming her eyes; gently pulled his face down to rest against hers. But he had not recovered yet from the shock that Pink had given him. After a moment he lifted his head.

"I felt, when I thought he'd killed you, things that I'd never felt before. I'd have shot him and gone to Rawlins. I would have, Jessie. Why, good God, you are my wife!"

"That wouldn't have brought me back, Hughie, and it would have wrecked your career."

"You don't understand. I don't care what it did to me. I've borne all the rest. That I could not have borne." He looked at her keenly. "You are in real pain, Jessie?"

"No, I'm not," said Jessie steadily. "Hughie, what about the opening ceremonies. There will be a lot of trouble for you about this."

Hugh nodded.

"I'll help you to get on Jackrabbit, and we'll start for home."

"In just a moment, Hughie. Mrs. Ellis is going to be terribly upset over your not being there. It's going to take a long time for you to live down what they'll feel was your quitting them on this."

"I know all that, and I'm sorry," said Hugh. He still was kneeling beside her. "Jessie"—looking into her eyes—"did you say a moment ago that you'd never turn from me again?"

"Yes, Hughie."

"Even knowing all my weaknesses and how much bigger you have grown to be than I?"

Jessie smiled and did not answer him. She still was holding his hands, and Hugh,

watching her eyes anxiously, saw a look of such tenderness, such loyalty swell up from their violet depths that he dropped his own in very humility.

IT WAS across this magic silence that there sounded a staccato fusillade.

"The *Dinosaur*!" exclaimed Jessie. "Hughie, you still can get to the ceremonies!"

Hugh breathed deeply and then rose, drawing Jessie carefully upward.

"Rest against the tree, Jessie, while I bring up your horse."

"Yes; get me into the saddle and then hurry as fast as you can to Martin. Li Wing will take care of me."

Hugh made no response, but when Jessie was mounted, he brought the dapple-gray in beside her, swung deliberately into his saddle, and then said,

"We'll take you into Fort Sioux to Doc Olson."

"Listen Hughie; I don't need the doctor. Hurry on, dear, please!"

"If you don't need the doctor, then you are well enough to come to the ceremonies."

The sound of the *Dinosaur's* engine, which had ceased, suddenly began again. Jessie spurred her horse and, Hugh following, they emerged from the grove just as the *Dinosaur* came to a pause not a hundred yards away. Martin and Li Wing ran toward them.

"Just a sprained ankle after a fall from my horse!" cried Jessie.

"One of Pink's lies," added Hugh, "though he did cut the telephone-wires."

Martin came to a stop, gulped, dug out his watch and said:

"For the love of heaven, get aboard! We still can make it."

Hugh nodded.

"Li Wing, take the horses home. Martin, help me get my wife aboard. Come, Jessie!"

"Li Wing spliced the wires and telephoned over an hour ago," Martin explained, as they helped Jessie into the plane. "Doc's got Pink pretty well drenched out, and I took him down to my place. Red Wolf and Fred came in, hell bent, just before I got the engine going. Seems they wanted to see the ceremonies and were bringing Pink down by sheep wagon from Red Wolf's camp, where they'd been keeping him. They were driving unbroke mules, some little pets of Red Wolf's, and they ran away yesterday

afternoon. Where or how they dropped Pink, they don't know. I left the three of them to argue it out."

Jessie looked at Hugh pitifully.

"I just don't know what to do about it, Hughie. I'm ashamed."

Suddenly Hugh chuckled.

"I know what to do!" He turned to Li Wing. "Li Wing, you gallop back to the ranch and telephone to Martin's house for Pink to meet me at the ceremonies. Understand?"

Li Wing nodded. A moment later the *Dinosaur* glided out over the field and rose in beautiful flight.

It was just noon when the governor's airplane came to rest on the plains above the dinosaur cave. A great crowd was gathered round the platform. Leading Jessie between them, Hugh and Martin slowly moved up the draw that led from the landing-place of the plane to the platform. Johnny Parnell galloped out to meet them.

"For the love of heaven, Governor, where have you been? What do you—" He stared at Hugh in hopeless disgust. "Do you think you can get up on the platform looking as if you'd been out all night? Not shaved, clothes— All kinds of rotten gossip started again about Pink and Jessie and you—"

"Oh, dry up, Johnny!" exclaimed Hugh. "Has Pink turned up?"

"Yes. He looks worse than you do."

"Send him over here—quickly, Johnny! I'll explain everything later. Keep the crowd patient for a moment."

Johnny galloped away, and a moment later, as Hugh and Martin eased Jessie against a boulder, Pink shambled through the snow and came to pause before them.

"Pink," said Hugh, "you've been acting like a skunk."

Pink looked at his son-in-law sullenly.

"Who's got a better right?" he asked. "Everybody's went back on me."

"This last escapade of yours smells to heaven. For your wife's sake and my wife's sake we've got to stop the talk. And you've got to behave yourself from now on. When these ceremonies are over, you go out to the ranch and see if you can fill in Johnny's place."

"You mean Bookie's ranch?" asked Pink stupidly. "I'm still kind of drunk, Hughie."

"You aren't too drunk to take orders."

You take Martin's place and help Jessie. Both you and Jessie are to come up on the platform with me. We'll settle this gossip for good and all."

Jessie stared from Hugh to her father and back again. Pink's face began to work.

"You mean me on the platform, Hughie?"

"Yes. Take Jessie's other arm."

Tears began to roll down Pink's cheeks.

"You mean me—on the platform?"

"Yes! Yes!"—impatiently from Hugh.

"Hurry, Pink!"

Still the governor's father-in-law did not move.

"I guess I must be drunker than I think I am, Hughie. It sounds too good to be true."

"Come, dad!" Jessie held her hand out to her father. "I've sprained my ankle. You'll have to help me."

Pink sniffled and obeyed.

They were a disheveled trio, but as they mounted the little platform and turned to face the crowd, no one laughed. Leaving Jessie to lean on her father's shoulder, Hugh stepped forward.

"My wife had an accident," he said clearly, "which delayed our getting here. Since Johnny Parnell has taken to politics the horses up on the dude ranch have gone wild. One threw Mrs. Stewart early this morning and sprained her ankle. It probably won't happen again, because my father-in-law has agreed to take charge up there while Johnny is running the state Capitol."

Laughter that expressed a not inconsiderable amount of wonder swept the crowd. Hugh raised his hand.

"Friends and neighbors," he said, "I suppose there is none among you that hasn't some inkling of what it means to me to press the button which will set off the blast in the cave below. I fought a long fight with myself before I reached the point where I can stand here believing that the Old Sioux Tract at last is doing the work that Uncle Bookie would have been glad to have it do." He paused.

"By golly!" shouted Billy Chamberlain. "Hughie Stewart is a man!"

Such a burst of applause met Billy's exclamation that Thumb Butte echoed again and again. And Hugh, lips only slightly strained, placed his thumb on the electric button.

A fearful detonation filled the air. When the dust had cleared away, the floor of the dinosaur cave lay naked to the heavens. Hugh turned to Jessie.

"Let's get back to The Lariat," he said.

Pink, no longer tearful, chin and chest up, helped Jessie into the automobile which was to take her and Hughie down to Fort Sioux. The crowd pressed close about the machine.

"Do I ride down with you, Hughie?" asked Pink in a loud voice.

"As you please, Pink," replied Hugh.

Pink scrambled into the seat beside the driver, utterly deaf to the greetings of his old friends.

"I'll take the wheel, Jimmy," he said, "if there is any danger of your jarring Jessie's ankle."

"You go to the devil!" said the driver, and he started the car carefully downward.

TWO hours later Hugh and Jessie unlocked the door of The Lariat. The red eye of the heater bade them welcome. Hugh settled Jessie in a chair, then stood looking down at her.

"You are going back to Cheyenne with me to-night, Jessie?" he asked.

Jessie did not answer this query immediately.

"Hugh," she said abruptly, "you sacrificed a good deal for me to-day."

Hugh's eyes looked puzzled, but he smiled.

"I suppose it's sacrifice on my part to drag you round the country with a sprained ankle." Suddenly he knelt beside her chair. "Jessie, do you know what to-day has taught me? It has taught me that I love you as a man should love his wife—passionately, Jessie, and, oh, with what admiration and devotion!" He drew her toward him, and the endless rush of the river seemed to mingle with their close embrace.

THE END

NOTE—"Mellowing Money," by Francis Lynde, an intensely human story of the redemption of a derelict, begins in—

August *EVERYBODY'S*—out July 14th

E1 Tancred o of Ballycan

*The Transformation of Connor Roche Effected by a Balking Jackass, a Boastful Sailor and a Beautiful Colleen,
Not to Mention the Bull*

By W. D. Hepenstall

THEY had almost cleared the bog when the wheels of the donkey cart went down till the axle was not more than a foot from the ground, and all Connor's persuasiveness could not induce his sturdy little beast to budge them an inch.

"Why don't you hit him a few thundering good skelps with your stick?" shouted old Bartle Finn from the road.

"Sure," croaked Onnie Keogh, the second spectator, "the poor gommoch hasn't enough spunk in him to strike a fighting midge."

"You're right, Onnie," said Bartle. "Connor Roche would run ten thousand miles from his own shadow, and if it once overtook him he'd fall speechless across it with fright."

Meanwhile, Connor continued to eulogize his animal's character in terms which should have called forth some pretense of effort from any ass with an atom of self-respect left. But Connor's ass had none. He stood stolidly in his tracks with head lowered to a pensive angle, and when his master, tired of appealing to his better nature, twirled the shillalah within an inch of his head, he showed his complete indifference by munching such blades of grass as could be reached without undue effort.

Hopeless, indeed, seemed the situation when who should come along the road but Curly Steve, the tinker—a man famed throughout six counties for his great way with asses—and when Connor's wily beast saw the tinker stride into the bog, he admitted to himself the possibility of trouble.

Steve wasted no time in cajolery. Snatching the stick from the hand of the gasping

Connor, he proceeded to manipulate it with an impressive dexterity born of long experience and a thorough knowledge of the anatomy of the ass.

Not many strokes had fallen before the animal threw his weight into the collar, and the cart was whisked out of the bog onto the hard road beyond.

And now Connor found himself faced with a still more annoying problem, for in Ballycan a man's ass is as sacred as his wife. An interloper might just as well strike one as the other. Curly Steve had given his ass a whaling, and honor demanded that he should do likewise to the gigantic tinker—he must imperil his precious skin because of the chicanery of an ass.

Curly Steve fell into an attitude of careless confidence. Onnie and Bartle exchanged a smile not devoid of hope. There came a tense, expectant pause, broken at length by Connor.

"Glory be to God!" he said. "But that was a nice stroke of work!"

Bartle spat his disgust. Onnie shrieked her derision. Curly Steve acknowledged the compliment with a nod and went on his way, not at all displeased at this sign of growing enlightenment, for he never had been able to perceive why the feelings of an ass were entitled to the smallest consideration.

"Connor Roche," admonished Bartle, "you're a shame and a disgrace to your country and your kin."

"Ah, wirra, wirra!" wailed Onnie. "Sure he can't be his mother's son at all. The O'Donnells were always a great fighting stock."

"There's been too much fighting stock in this country," said Connor, with some heat. "All any one had to do was to tap us on the back and call us the 'bould Irish lads,' and off we marched to shed our blood like gallowidiot. And when there was no fighting to be done for anybody else, we always took care to stir up a bit among ourselves. Well, what has it ever brought us? Hard knocks and poverty—not a ha'porth else."

"I'd have been the great fool surely to have stood up to that curly Goliath, and him with great fists on him like Finn McCool. 'Tis battered to small bits I'd have been, and all for the sake of a scheming ould ass who wouldn't give me a grateful look from one year's end to the other."

The old woman assumed a prophetic attitude and pointed an ominous finger at Connor.

"You're going to pay dear for your cowardice," she said. "You're going to lose the finest girl in the parish."

"Aye; and with a nate bit of ground and a shop besides," Bartle added.

With a skeptical laugh, Connor said,

"Who towld you I'm going to lose her?"

"My taycup towld me," answered Onnie. "Three days running I've read it for Belle Cassidy, and I've seen a real man coming out of the world for her at last."

"Belle is not such a fool as to pay any heed to what you see in your taycup."

"My taycup never lies." The old woman pointed down the road. "Look!"

Connor looked. He rubbed his eyes. He looked again. Surely he must be dreaming! But no; for the two figures drew nearer, and he saw, to his amazement and dismay, that Belle's hand was resting on the arm of a tall young stranger.

"'Tis Joe Meehan's nephew," explained Bartle. "No wonder Belle has taken to him so quick. He's sailed clean round the walls of the world and has great tales to tell of the sights he has seen on the seven seas."

"I shouldn't wonder if he'd be giving up the sea very soon," Onnie observed suggestively. "Belle's father is growing feeble and some one is needed to look after the place."

Not wishing to be outdone in rubbing it into Connor, Bartle said:

"'Tis a murthering pity for a man to be losing a girl like that. Look, Onnie! Look

at the way she moves! 'Tis hard to believe she's touching the ground at all."

"True for you, Bartle! Sure she's like Queen Maeve and Vaynus rowled into one."

"Aye; and there's more blue in her eyes, Onnie, than in all the violets that ever grew upon this earth."

"You're right," agreed Onnie. "And sure a girl like herself could never be mating with a man who can't defend the honor of his ass."

"Belle wouldn't be wanting me to make a fool of myself," snapped Connor.

Bartle shook his white head sagely.

"You're wrong there, lad. A girl has no admiration for a man's wisdom till he's willing to be a fool for her sake."

"Well, I'm not going to be that fool," said Connor decisively.

BY THIS time Belle and her companion were almost level with the little group. To Connor's dismay, she seemed as if she would pass him with nothing more than a nod. He was relieved when she tripped across and spoke to the ass.

"Don't touch him!" warned Bartle.

"And why not?" smiled Belle.

"Don't touch him!" Bartle repeated. "He's lost his honor." And while the old man was relating the disgraceful incident, the ass hung his head in corroboration.

Belle appeared to make light of the matter; but Connor could not tell if her carelessness were real or assumed.

Onnie turned to Meehan's nephew with an aggrieved expression in her ancient eyes.

"I wonder," she said, "where all our bravery has gone to at all."

"To Spain!" A general gasp of astonishment following the pat answer. "The bravest man I ever saw in my living life was in Spain."

"G'along!" Bartle derided. "You don't mane to say them Spanishers are braver than us?"

"Troth, then, I do. I saw one of them stand as still as a gate-post while a raging bull charged at him full tilt."

"But didn't he step out of the bull's road at the last minute?"

"Not him! He never moved an eyelash."

"And do you mane to tell us he wasn't butchered by the bull?"

"A bull won't lay a hand on a man who doesn't move."

"A horn," corrected Bartle, who was a stickler for accuracy—in others.

"'El Tancredo,' they called him," the sailor proceeded. "He stood there in the ring, dressed all in white. Out dashes the bull from the *toril*. For a minute he stands shaking his black head, dazzled a bit. Then he sees the Tancredo and goes for him like a streak of lightning. Right up to the man he charges. At the very last second he stops short, just in time. Then he sniffs round, puzzled-like, while the Tancredo stands stiff as a statue of white stone. After a while Misther Bull trots off to look for some real divarshin. And he gets it, too, from the *chulos* and the *picadores* and the *matadores* and all the other dores. They did some purty plucky things before they made beef of his nibs, but none of them did such a brave act as the Tancredo."

"It was a courageous deed, sure enough," admitted Bartle. "I'm not overpleased to hear of it, however, for I was under the impression we held the world's record."

Onnie punctuated, with a regretful sigh, "What a pity we never have a bull-fight in Ballycan!"

"We're going to have one!" The words came like the crack of a whip from Belle. They all stared at her in astonishment as she went on eagerly: "My uncle, Ned Feeney, has the wickedest red bull ever known in these parts. His field in the dip of the hills will do fine for the ring. The fight will be a great entertainment for the whole countryside on Patrick's day. Hurroo! I'll settle it all before I go to bed this night."

"Mother o' Moses!" whispered Bartle to Onnie. "The girl's gone off her nut!"

"Whisht! Maybe there's method in her madness."

"It'll be a glorious spectacle!" rippled Belle. "All we need is the man." Her glance went from Connor to the sailor and back again.

"The clouds are coming low," observed Connor, looking away. "I shouldn't be at all surprised if we had a taste more rain."

Belle turned to Meehan's nephew.

"You'll be our Tancredo? You know how it's done."

"I know how it's done, sure enough," the sailor admitted. Then, after a glance at his watch, he said, "Isn't it getting on for tay-time?"

Belle's gaze, intent and full of suggestion, once more came back to the unhappy Connor, who murmured to himself, "She's the loveliest girl that ever stepped, but I do wish she hadn't such power in her eyes."

He stuttered; he fidgeted. The girl came close and laid a hand on his shoulder pleadingly.

"You'll do it, Connor?" she said.

He shook his head.

"Sorry to disoblige you, Belle, but I can see no sense in the undertaking."

She drew back from him. Her red lips were an adorable bow of contempt.

"I'll find a man—never fear!" she said. "And that's the man I'll marry, if he wants me."

The rivals exchanged anxious glances, while Onnie and Bartle craned forward, expecting the sailor to speak.

To their astonishment it was Connor who declared,

"I'll do it, Belle *acushla*."

And to his credit be it said there was no thought in his mind of the shop or land she would inherit.

"More power to you, Connor. I'll go see my uncle this minute."

Before he could realize the horror of his position, she was speeding down the road.

"I'm sorry for you, Connor Roche," Bartle observed, "for if Feeney's bull ever gets his head fairly under you he'll sling you clean over the stars."

The sailor grinned confidently.

"I have no fears at all. Sure it takes a real man to face a bull."

Seeing no prospect of comfort in the conversation, Connor shouted, "Gee up!" to the ass, and piloted the animal homeward, in utter dejection.

Far from displaying sympathy, the ass, after the harness had been removed, lay down in the dust and rolled luxuriously, expressing his feelings in grunts of delight.

"Well, aren't you the unnatural baste?" chided Connor. "Bad cess to you, I believe you'd rowl upon my grave!"

BY THE eve of St. Patrick's day preparations for the spectacle were well advanced. Ned Feeney, after stipulating that he should be allowed to charge sixpence a head gate-money, placed his fields and his bull at the disposal of the committee which had been promptly organized to

see the affair through. Dinny Devlin, the owner of an adjoining public house, sensing a day of unusually profitable trade, had placards liberally posted throughout the adjoining parishes.

All Ballycan, in fact, had taken to the idea with gusto. Assuredly, Connor's exploit should put the place on the map and make the athletic sports, held a year before in the rival village of Kilmorey, look a very tame affair indeed.

True, Ballycan had grave doubts concerning the courage of its champion; but not for worlds would it unbosom its misgivings to envious Kilmorey. On the contrary, it pictured Connor as a potential hero who had long pined for an opportunity to demonstrate his valor. Much fertility was shown in fabricating gallant exploits with him as the central figure, and great emphasis was laid on the fighting quality of his O'Donnell blood.

The only person in Ballycan not imbued with the general enthusiasm was the Tancredo himself. Connor lost his appetite; his sleep was troubled and scanty, and when he should have been at work on his little farm, he was roving, melancholy and alone, through the fields.

No rain had fallen for more than a week. For March, the weather was unusually warm and kind. Already spring was painting the landscape with delicate green, coaxing the first primroses to show their faces and encouraging the blackbirds and thrushes to proclaim how winter had been banished from the land.

All the joyousness round him only served to accentuate Connor's gloom.

"It's hard," he thought, "to have to lave this grand earth behind me. Once face to face with that bull and I'm a goner, for I couldn't keep from thrembling—no; not if I was to be paid a million pounds a minute. I'll go straight to Belle now and tell her I won't do it."

He looked at his watch. It was nearly seven o'clock. Less than twenty-four hours would decide his fate.

HE FOUND Belle busy with the committee, but she came out to the door and greeted him warmly. His resolution began to melt in the beam of her smile.

"What I came to tell you is," Connor stammered, "that—that——"

"That the Scullybogue Band has promised to play for us," she broke in. "Everything's going grand! It'll be the greatest day ever known."

"Now, listen to me, Belle; I want you to tell the committee——"

"Sure the committee knows already. Hurroo for Ballycan! Two reporters coming all the way from Dublin! Think of the Dublin papers printing a notice about you!"

"Aye; my death-notice."

Belle did not seem to hear this lugubrious remark.

"Uncle Ned," she called, "take Connor down to your place and help him to make friends with the bull."

Then, with a hurried good-night, she dashed off as Ned Feeney, a sad-visaged individual, appeared.

"Make friends with the bull, is it?" said Feeney. "God help her sense! One might as well hope to make friends with the ould boy himself."

And when Connor saw the animal he was inclined to agree with the owner.

"Did you ever see a bigger bull in all your life?" said Feeney.

"Never. Is he securely chained?"

"Double chained. But keep your distance just the same. I can see that he dislikes you."

There was no need to give this warning. Connor never approached nearer than ten yards as his gaze took in the animal's huge bulk. The horns, especially, fascinated him.

"Do you never loose him at all?" queried Connor.

"I have to loose him now and then to keep him from pulling the shed down."

"And what does he do when you let him out?"

"Faith, he goes ripping, raging mad. He carries on as if he'd tear the face clean off the earth and darken the sun with it."

"O Lord! But surely there's some way to his betther feelings?"

"His betther wha—at?"

"His betther feelings."

"Arrah; talk sense, man! How can there be a way to something that doesn't exist?"

As if wishing to live up to the character his master had given him, the bull began to snort and tug at his chain in a most alarming manner. Connor made a hasty departure.

He turned homeward, extremely depressed. He felt angry with Belle for having placed him in such a terrible predicament, and he cudgelled his brains to try to find some satisfactory explanation for her strange conduct, but in vain.

BY THE time he was passing Devlin's public house he felt the need of a tonic. Devlin held out a welcoming hand, declaring that the best in his establishment would not cost Connor a ha'penny.

"I'd be the mane man surely," he said, "to be taking money from my benefactor. Connor *avic*, I don't know how to thank you at all." He pointed triumphantly to numerous barrels of porter ranged end on end along the walls. "This is a glorious bit of thrade you're bringing me."

Connor did not respond to the publican's enthusiasm.

"Aren't you counting your chickens rather early?" he said.

"Holy smoke!" cried Devlin in dismay. "You don't mane to say you're going to renage?"

"I suppose I can do as I like."

"Indeed you can't do as you like! You've got to uphold the good name of the town and wipe the stain of the ass from your keracther."

"And what if I lose my life?"

"And what if I lose my thrade?"

"My life's more important than your thrade."

"Nonsense! Nonsense! To-morrow's doings will put me on my feet."

"Aye; and they'll put me in my grave."

"Well, won't we both be betther off? I'll have the money and you'll have the glory."

"Glory doesn't bring much comfort to a man when there's six feet of cowl'd clay on top of him."

"You're most unraysonable, Connor. There's lots of men would lep at the opportunity for making such a highly satisfactory end. Why, it's the chance of a lifetime!"

"Well, maybe you'd like to take advantage of the chance yourself, Dinny Devlin?"

"I might like to, but I wouldn't take it." Devlin sighed. "I've got my self-respect to think of, Connor. How could I look the neighbors in the face if I deprived you

of this dazzling opportunity? Why, I'd never be able to howld my head up!"

"I dare say not. The bull would see to that."

"But think of the honor it will be for Belle! 'Tis not every girl who has a man dying to plaze her. Think of the grand songs they'll be singing about her at the fairs!"

Connor bestowed on the publican a stare of dismay. His sweetheart's attitude appeared to him in a new light.

"Well, Dinny," he said, "you can take my word for it—there'll be no bull-fight in Ballycan to-morrow."

"Oh, murther!" cried Devlin. "Do you want to bring me to the poorhouse in the heel of my days?" He grabbed Connor by the arm. "Go through with it," he pleaded, "and I'll give them a half-barrel for your wake."

Connor tried to shake him off.

"Let me go, Dinny!" he cried. "My mind's made up."

"A half-barrel, I said, Connor, and I'll stick to my word."

"It's no use, Dinny."

"Think of the fine things they'll be saying about you with all that elegant dhrink inside them!"

"Let me go, I tell you."

"I'll throw in a bottle of whisky as well. It'll be the most gorgeous send-off ever."

Here Connor managed to break loose, and, as Dinny tried to grab him again, he took to his heels.

"*Musha*—bad cess to you!" the publican roared after him. "You're the selfishest man who ever drew breath. 'Tis ruined I'll be with twenty barrels on my hands."

Connor walked briskly with the intention of having it out with Belle. He was not going to be sacrificed for a girl's whim, no matter how fond he might be of her. He had almost reached the house when a few drops of rain gave his thoughts a fresh turn. He stopped and looked up at the lowering sky.

"After this long dry spell," he reflected, "'tis sure to be a teeming day to-morrow. That means there'll be no bull-fight. Why shouldn't I hold my tongue and get credit for the bravery I'll not be called upon to prove?"

He reached home drenched to the skin, but elated.

"Saved!" he murmured. Saved! God bless the good Irish rain!"

FOR the first time in many nights Connor slept soundly. He made up for some of the repose he had lost by sleeping well on into the afternoon of the following day. Probably he would have slept longer had he not been awakened by the lively marching-measure that came from fifes and drums.

Connor slipped out of bed and peered through the window. He rubbed his eyes, unable to believe they were not playing him false.

"'Tis an ugly dhrame I'm having," he muttered.

But it was no dream. The sun was shining; a pleasant breeze was drying the ground, and the Scullybogue Band was marching past in full regalia.

Before Connor had finished dressing two members of the committee, Peter Moyles and Larry Keegan, were waiting to escort him to the field of action."

"Hurry up," said Larry, as Connor tried to make a protracted breakfast. "You mustn't keep the bull waiting."

Down the road, between his watchful companions, went the Tancredo, past a long line of donkey carts and jaunting-cars, with here and there a Ford to lend vehicular distinction to the gathering.

The entrance to Feeney's flat field was jammed with a seething, excited mass of humanity.

Peter and Larry had difficulty in finding elbow-room as they arrayed Connor in a white night-shirt which had been specially laundered for the occasion.

Friendly advice was tendered plentifully, the only jarring note coming from Meehan's nephew, who observed,

"Wouldn't he be feeling more comfortable in a suit of armor?"

Connor, angry with himself and the world in general, resented the observation. His pale face flushed and he made a quick movement in the sailor's direction. Another lively feature might have been added to the day's entertainment had not his custodians led the Tancredo into the field.

As Connor entered, the densely packed throng on the rising ground sent up a great cheer of greeting. Never before had the lungs of Ballycan been exercised with such pleasure, and even envious Kilmorey—

represented by its inhabitants *en masse*—could not forbear a cheer.

Nevertheless, Ballycan was not deceived by this chivalrous display. It had taken note of the forest of blackthorns waving above the vantage-ground occupied by the Kilmorey forces, and several messengers had been despatched rearward in search of cudgels to make good the weapon deficiency in the local camp.

Moreover, a rumor was in circulation to the effect that any hoax in the proceedings would be regarded by the enemy as a signal for battle. Kilmorey would not hesitate to shed its blood to retrieve its sixpences.

In the center of the field an upturned tub had been placed and its handles sunk in the ground. Before he mounted this rude pedestal the Tancredo's eyes were bandaged with a white cloth.

"It'll make things aisier for you," said Larry. "You'll never see the bull till you feel him."

"Whisht!" admonished Peter. "You're nearly as good a comforter as that black-guard of a bandmaster. This is a quare time to be playing 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.'"

As his companions moved off, Connor's spirits went down. Their retreating footsteps left him with a sense of desolation. He felt as inevitably doomed as a condemned prisoner on the drop. It felt a cruel thing to have to die with the fresh smell of the soil blowing in his nostrils.

The band stopped playing. Through the bandage the voices of the people came to Connor like the swell and recede of the ocean. Suddenly the sound subsided till it was no louder than the droning of bees. Feeny was driving out the bull.

Came a shout of greeting for the second combatant, and then silence settled upon the crowd. Connor pictured the spectators leaning forward with indrawn breath, their gaze passing and repassing from him to the bull.

A tremor from the earth—the sound of scampering hoofs getting louder every second. The Tancredo swayed and almost fell from his pedestal.

Cries of derision from Kilmorey. Yells of defiance from Ballycan, followed by an encouraging shout for their champion which had in it the elements of a prayer.

Then the band burst forth in the wild martial strains of "O'Donnell Abboo." Connor felt a thrill pass through him. His shaking limbs stiffened.

Louder, more inspiring swelled the music. The Tancredo's blood warmed as though he had drunk strong wine. The voice of some valorous ancestor seemed to be speaking to him through the fifes and drums.

Within a few yards of the curious white figure the galloping beast stopped short. Then he walked slowly round and round, emitting inquisitive snorts as his damp muzzle almost touched the Tancredo.

More shouts of encouragement from Ballycan. Then voices, singing to the music:

"On ev'ry mountaineer,
Stranger to flight and fear!
Rush to the standard of dauntless Red Hugh!
Bonnaught and gallow-glass,
Throng from each mountain pass,
On for old Erin, O'Donnell Abboo!"

Connor felt the animal's hot breath upon his right hand. Its horns almost touched him. Motionless as sculptured marble he stood, his hands clenched, his lips set tight, exulting in his ordeal.

As the mystified brute trotted slowly back to the shed, Ballycan went frantic. Hats and sticks were hurled high in the air and cheer succeeded cheer.

To its honor be it said, Kilmorey, though not quite so demonstrative, was hearty in its applause, and was represented in the rush of eager youths that contended for the honor of bearing the hero shoulder-high from the field.

Connor was rather cold in his response to Belle's congratulations. True, he had come out of the affair with flying colors, but he realized how different the result might have been.

His voice had a reproachful ring as he said,

"If I hadn't stood firm as a rock I'd surely have been murdered by the bull."

Belle drew him away from the crowd.

"Listen," she whispered; "don't breathe a word of this, for them Kilmorey goboyes would raise ructions if they were to hear. Only my uncle and Devlin and a few of the lads know about it. There never was any danger of you being murdered by the bull, for the baste wasn't a bull at all. It was the big stall-fed bullock. Him and the bull were twin calves, and they're as like as two paws. But *you* didn't know about it, Connor. You're after proving you're bravery in the eyes of the world, and in the years to come nobody can be flinging the ass in my face."

Isn't Sudden Fortune Ruinous?

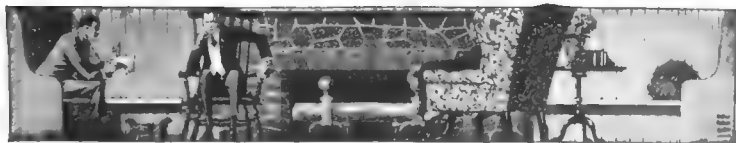
THIS is the question that was put to Francis Lynde, an author whose score or more of novels have made him well known to the public.

"Is it?" Mr. Lynde rejoined. "Let's see." And, with the pondering of this question, the story began to grow. It is called—

Mellowing Money.

It tells what happens to a derelict upon whom huge responsibility is suddenly thrust. It is a very human picture of the redemption of a man. Beginning in—

August *EVERYBODY'S*—out July 14th



Everybody's Chimney Corner

*Where Reader, Author and Editor
Gather to Talk Things Over*

THE bugbear of the fiction-writer, to use editor-and-author parlance, is a "hole" in a story. Every author should go over his manuscript with a microscope, as it were, for "holes."

But let Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, whose new novel "Thoroughbred" begins in this issue, explain:

A "hole" is that vast gap between the action of a story and the reader's credulity. A writer guilty of "holes" is one who will lead a character to water when there is no trough or any water to drink, and then blithely go on as if these properties existed. He will glose over necessary explanations or leave them out altogether. He doesn't make two ends meet. He impudently tells his reader that three and three make eight. These are deadly sins.

MRS. WOODROW has had many years of experience as an author, and some of it set down on paper may be helpful to young writers and interesting to readers as well. Sometimes, she says, a story starts because she is interested in a certain subject, sometimes because she is interested in a certain character.

She continues:

Starting with a general idea of my story, I select the imaginary characters which are to interpret my drama very much as a theatrical manager casts his play. That much accomplished, I begin to build up the situations. Plot, characterization and incident—the three are absolutely interdependent; and the greatest of these is characterization. It has always seemed to me that one of the most important elements in a mystery yarn is what is technically known as the "duel;" that is, the battle of the hero with some retarding force—fate, circumstances, a person, or a combination of them. It is present in a greater or less degree in all fiction; but in a mystery story it must be emphasized. But, ranking even

the duel, is that indispensable element—suspense. Suspense is not merely the spice to the pie; it is one of the principal ingredients. Tom Taylor's immortal recipe for a good play: "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait" is also applicable to a mystery story.

SOME writers of mystery stories explain everything in the last chapter, as readers well know. Mrs. Woodrow tries to avoid this. She tries to wind up all the loose threads before she approaches the conclusion.

She goes on:

It is here that the "twist" is invaluable. The reader says: "Ah! I see. This will happen." Surprise him. Turn your situation in a way that he doesn't expect. But do it plausibly. Don't torture a helpless situation. Wind and twist, carry him along on the sheer momentum of your narrative. I am laughing at myself as I dogmatize so lightly. It is easy enough to enjoin speed; hard enough to achieve it. To lend wings to your story is one of the most difficult stunts in fiction.

CARLYSLE GRAHAM RAHT (The Diamond-back, page 111) admits that he is a Texan, but declares that he doesn't grow horns.

In thirty-odd years he has covered much of the old and new West. He's been a pearl-diver; he has played the piano in dance-halls, has gone in for historical research, mining and cow-punching. His wife calls him a domesticated nomad.

The genuine diamond-back [he says, in answer to a query about the rattlesnake that appears in his story] is found mostly in Arkansas and eastern Texas. The diamonds of the Western rattler are not so clearly defined, nor is that reptile so large. Colloquially, the term "diamond-back" is also applied to the latter. However, the territory in which these two distinct species are found seems to lap over, as I have seen the larger diamond-back as far down as



This is *He*, who is Carlyle Graham Raht's main occupation in life. Story-writing is merely a side-line to earn a living. But it's all right for just that, as you'll see when you read "The Diamond-back," page 109 of this issue.

northeastern Mexico and as far west as the Davis Mountains, where I lay my story.

IN RESPONSE to the editor's request for a photograph, he replies:

As per your request, I'm sending the most attractive likeness I possess, although I'll confess it flatters me. *He* is my business in life—writing is merely a side-line by which I earn a living. Just now, while I'm in New York, *He* is saving every canceled milk-ticket, theatre ticket and every other sort to send daddy, so daddy will have a ticket to ride the choo-choo back to him. And you bet I'm going *prontitol*

THE author of "Half White" (page 23), Barrett Willoughby, has lived in Alaska ever since she was five years old. Read what she says of her life there:

I have just come in from a tramp across the sunny tundra and along the beach. My three hours away from my typewriter have netted me this: a keen appetite, a great bowl of violets which perfume my desk, and a mind full of the beauty of Alaskan summer—sea wind stirring the silvered green of rice-grass, the wild peas in red and purple blossom, the flag-lilies, bronze bells, and violet lupine with flower-spikes a foot long, and the wild strawberries that are a mass of white and yellow with puffs of fragrance

coming from them sweeter and fresher than the scent of California gardens. But that is not all. With Alaskan practicability I dropped my fish-line into some hidden brown pools I know, and now ten shining, speckled trout with vermilion-colored fins are sending out another fragrance from the kitchen, and in about twenty minutes my little mother will serve them, crisp and bacon-garnished, with some radishes from her garden and some stewed wild rhubarb that an old Indian friend brought us from the meadows near the village, and other things.

BEGINNING with engineering, Douglas Newton (Long Distance, page 71) tried architecture, insurance, and Fleet Street special corresponding among other things. Then Arnold Bennett's secretary. But all the time he wanted to write stories, and at last he began.

Death to all manner of extremists [he explains in a message to "Chimney Corner."] I'd like to wipe out all those who want to batter the world into conformity with the loaded club of their own peculiar ideals and give the good, solid, whole-meal majorities a chance to work their patient way forward. There's nothing so cruel as a crank, whether he is a Down-with-Labor or a Down-with-Capital or a Down-with-Anything fellow. They are the reason, I think, why the great mass of the world's people (and there never was a time when the great mass had better intentions) is not making the best of the post-war job.

THAT heaven is said to be filled with immaculate people makes W. D. Hepenstall ("El Tancredo," page 166) want to go somewhere else. He says he couldn't stand people who have shed all their follies. He finds the world full of joy because it is filled with imperfect men and women. And then he tells about a play in which he collaborated as author and played a part—that of a blind fiddler.

At the last moment it had been decided that I must be led on by a dog. The worst thing about that dog was that he wanted to act. And, furthermore, he was a bad actor. He had no sense of position. He led me to places where I should not have been. Perhaps he wanted to make me open my eyes to get my bearings. But this I resolutely refused to do, even when he coiled his rope twice round my legs.

The reptile succeeded, however, in driving all my cues and speeches clean out of my mind. But they had put me on to act, and I was going to act. The play would not be damned through any omission on my part. So whenever I noticed a pause where a speech of mine might possibly belong, I croaked forth a "Glory be to God!" That's the one great advantage of being in an Irish play. A person can never get stuck. There's always "Glory be to God!!" It's the only appropriate exclamation for all occasions.



Prose and Worse, by Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

In Iowa Falls: "Miss Delight Bump."
 In Insurance Exchange Building, Chicago: "Laundry work left before 9 A. M. may be had the forenoon the following day before 1 P. M. the next afternoon."
 On Sixty-fifth Street, Chicago: "Merchant Tailor. I do business on this place only. I am not connected with no other branches."
 On Halsted Street, Chicago: "Silk Skirts and Ladies' Clothing."
 Member of Chicago Lady Elks: "Miss Lily Flower."
 In Ohio restaurant: "Don't kick about our coffee. You may be old and weak some day."
 Apothecary's sign in Raritan, N. J.: "Unique Pharmacy. Pure Drugs."
 Name glimpsed on trunk at railway station: "Annie O. Place."
 In Brussels: "Toupetts made from Belgian Hair."
 On a Peoria, Ill., transfer-barn: "Our slogan: Two men on a trunk. No scratching on walls."
 In Chicago: "Broken Lenses Duplicated," and "This store will move across the street."

(Sioux City, Iowa, Journal)

OUR POLICY

Is to do your dental work so you will come again and keep on coming. OCKERMAN & OCKERMAN.

Ah, ha! So *that's* their little game, is it?

(Greenville, Ala., Advocate)

At 5 o'clock A.M., Nov. 29th, old Aunt Kizzie Braswell breathed her last. Her nurse stepped out a minute and came back to find Aunt Kizzie breathing her last. She never spoke again.

(MISS M. M. S.)

"Oh dear, what can the matter be?"

(Portland Oregonian)

MARRIAGE LICENSES:

WISE-KRAPs—Ray Wise, 25, and Mary Krap, 21.
 (J. F. J.)

Come'r seven; come'r 'leven.

(Adv. in Washington Post)

SLENDER DRESSES OF SILK FOR LARGE WOMEN
 (MRS. R. H. C.)

Is a shoe-horn included?

Everybody's Magazine, July, 1923

(New Orleans Daily States)

HORSE—One red horse with two large bumps on his front two legs in the back. Finder please return and receive reward. A. TAGLFALOVORE, 1136 Decatur.
 (E. M. M.)

How could you miss him?

(Adv. in Holland, Mich., Sentinel)

FOR SALE—Hampshire pigs. We have 30 full-grown pigs from the best families in Illinois. Pelham Lodge, Holland, Mich.

"Whew's whew" round the stock-yards.

(Notice posted in Missouri town)

FOR SALE—One brute sow with pigs by registered mail.

"Posted" is right!

(Columbus, Ohio, Dispatch)

WANTED—Experienced housekeeper to take complete charge of office. Address Box N-931, care Dispatch.
 (MRS. M. L. R.)

One who can milk and drive a Ford preferred, of course.

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(Bloomington, Ill., *Pantagraph*)

WANTED—Female fox-terrier; must be reasonable.
(MRS. E. I. H.)

What! A female reasonable?

(Leadville, Col., *Light*)

Aunt Mary Marshall had three dozen eggs spoil on her last week.

I always thought she was rather set in her ways.

(Valparaiso, Ind., *Messenger*)

Mr. Chester, when the lightning struck the barn, jumped over the cow he was milking and is resting very easy this afternoon.

Probably landed in her pail of mush.

(Athrusa, Ky., *Record*)

Melvin Short has returned from visiting his *sanche* in Durborrow. While he was there she made him a present of a new necktie and two pairs of new sox.

"Blest be the tie that binds."

(Mobile, Ala., *Presbyterian News*)

Riderwood church has discontinued its Presbyterian services and entered into a union arrangement with the Methodists whereby the Methodist pastor serves as pastor for the community. It is to be hoped this may not last long. (E. F. A.)

No; I never liked him, either.

(A few court cases)

Crook v. Citizens' Bank. 111 S.E. 916.

Casebier v. Casebier. 236 S.W. 966.

Shotwell v. Dodge. 36 Pac. 254.

Payne v. Doubtful. 236 S.W. 134.

In Mass.: *Commonwealth v. May B. Wise.* (She is now, all right.)

In N. Y.: *Knickerbocker Ice Co. v. Hades.*

(Chicago Tribune)

Miss G. S. writes: "Some time ago—last June, to be exact—I was kissed by a person and but recently I heard that he has tuberculosis. I do not know whether the report is true, but it has been a cause of great worry to me. I am a young woman of 20 years, 5 feet 2 inches tall, and weigh 124 pounds. I am strong and healthy. Do you think there is any cause to worry? If so, what would you advise me to do about it?"

Reply: Five months between kisses is a great drought. You have nothing to worry about.

Drought? Worry? Why, man, she's as good as dead both ways from the neck.

(Coshocton, Ohio, *Tribune*)

FINED FOR LOITERING

Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Smith, 350 McClain Av., received word Friday of the birth of a 10¾-pound son to their son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Archie Smith, at their home in Alliance Thursday.

Probably old Doc Stork got stuck in the snow-drift somewhere.

(Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune*)

She has the most wonderful eyes of any girl I have seen, for above them there is the wonderful setting of thick, yet not too thick, well-marked eyebrows, while the expression is that which one so often sees in the eye of the sailor who has been accustomed to look across great expenses. (G. M. M.)

Why sailor? Ask any married man on a small salary.

(Toronto *Star*)

At the morning services in Simpson Avenue church, the pastor announced that one of the leading officials of the church was throwing his house open from garret to cellar to the congregation on Tuesday evening.

Me for the cellar.

(Rhinebeck, N. Y., *Gazette*)

A. Gay and family have been taking an auto trip among the neighboring and impressive rocks and hills—out where the tremendous grandeur is most wonderful—out where the improvements to the highways have not in any way been abbreviated, but have been extened far and near— (W. T. A.)

Yes, yes! Go on—

(Follett, Tex., *Limelight*)

FASHION NOTES

The fairer sex have been wondering the past week what made Mrs. Jack Nagel have such beautiful complexion, but upon conclusion we find she has been using some up-to-date face-powder to keep up with Dame Fashion.

Miss Belva Louise Jones was seen powdering her cheeks Monday morning to keep in fashion. The next thing we know she will be painting her lips.

Miss Lola Kahoe has been appearing on the Busy Town streets with a brand-new coat on to keep up with the times.

Mrs. Theo. Duncan was making herself a real stylish dress to keep up with Dame Fashion Tuesday afternoon.

Mrs. Allinger purchased herself a real stylish dress Tuesday morning to keep up with the times.

Miss Myrtle Arthurs purchased herself a white dining-room apron Tuesday to keep in fashion.

Miss Lottie Hennigh was seen Sunday evening wearing a new hat to look stylish.

Southwestward the shades of Paris take their way.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

TWO hunters in the North Carolina woods had chased a wildcat to a clearing, and were terrified to see the beast jump through the window of a cabin from which the sound of a woman's voice had just been heard. On the porch, rocking comfortably and apparently unperturbed, sat Friend Husband.

"For heaven's sake, is your wife in there?" cried one of the horrified hunters.

"Yeah."

"Good Lord, man, get busy! A wildcat just jumped in the window!"

"Yeah? Well, let him git out the best way he can. I got no use for the pesky critters, and danged if I'm going to help him."

A FEW days before sailing back to England, Sir Philip Gibbs was a guest of the Dutch Treat Club, New York. He talked to them on the relationship between journalism and literature, and in the course of his speech dwelt upon prayer as a factor of journalistic success. To prove his point he related a personal anecdote of the time when he interviewed the late General Booth, of the Salvation Army. At the end of the interview the general fixed him with a burning eye.

"Down on your knees, young man," he said, "and join with me in prayer for the salvation of Lord Northcliffe."

Sir Philip knelt, and, for twenty minutes at least, Lord Northcliffe was brought to the personal attention of his Maker.

"The result of this," said Sir Philip, with a smile, "took place three days later. Northcliffe fired me from the *Daily Mail*."

OLE OLSEN had been working as an engine-wiper, and his boss, a thrifty man, had been coaching him for promotion to fireman with such advice as:

"Now, Ole, don't waste a drop of oil—that costs money. And don't waste the waste, either—that's getting expensive, too."

When Ole went up to be questioned on his eligibility for a fireman, he was asked:

"Suppose you are on your engine on a single track. You go round a curve and see rushing toward you an express. What would you do?"

To which Ole replied,

"I grab the oil-can; I grab the waste—and I yump."

A CERTAIN city editor of a Kansas newspaper desired to turn the spotlight of fame upon himself. To do so, he decided to emulate the policies of those well-known journals which are designated "yellow." He waited until the time was ripe. One day a murder occurred in Kansas City which attracted a great deal of attention. It gave him his chance. He called in a carpenter to make him extra large headlines—nothing smaller than a foot. Bubbling over with exultation, he took them up to the managing editor, expecting not only his O. K. but an enthusiastic word of commendation. The managing editor looked at them and nodded.

"Yes," he said; "marvelous, my dear fellow. Most striking. But," he went on, "I had rather hoped to keep these for the second coming of the Lord."

CLERK: Can you let me off this afternoon? My wife wants me to go shopping with her.

EMPLOYER: Certainly not! We're much too busy at present.

CLERK: Thank you very much, sir. You are exceedingly kind.

"DID you post those two letters I gave you, Norah?"

"Yes'm; at the post-office. But I noticed that you'd put the two-cent stamp on the foreign letter and the five-cent stamp on the city one."

"Oh, dear, what a blunder!"

"But I fixed it all right, ma'am. I just changed the addresses on the envelopes."

LITTLE Elsie had been particularly trying to her mother that day. She really seemed to find delight in teasing to the height of exasperation.

"If you are so naughty, Elsie, no one will love you," said her mother with a frown.

Yes, mother; I know some one who will love me. The badder I am the more he loves me."

"Why, Elsie, what do you mean?"

"The devil."

A NEWSPAPER editor had spread himself considerably in a touching obituary extolling the virtues of a popular but none too saintly townsman who was reported dead.

Later, the report was found to be false. So the next issue of the paper bore the statement of correction:

We learned after going to press that Mr. Jones was well and alive as usual. It is therefore with great pleasure that we renounce what we said about him in our obituary yesterday.

AN OLD darky from Georgia was sent to a hospital in Charleston. One of the nurses put a thermometer in his mouth to take his temperature. Presently, when one of the doctors made his rounds, he asked,

"Well, Nathan, how do you feel?"

"I feel right tol'ble, boss."

"Have you had any nourishment?"

"Yassir."

"What did you have?"

"A lady done gimme a piece of glass ter suck, boss."

A COLORED gentleman at a county fair had spent all his money on the merry-go-round. When he alighted from his last ride, his thrifty wife confronted him with:

"Now you spent yoh money, niggah, wha's you bin?"

A COUNTRYMAN on his first visit to New York came out of the Grand Central Station into the confusion of Forty-second Street, and after standing somewhat bewildered for a few minutes, walked over to a traffic-officer and said,

"Mister, I want to go to Central Park."

"All right," said the officer. **"You can go this time, but don't you ever, ever ask me again."**

COHEN, accompanied by his wife, visited the oculist to have his eyes examined.

"Now, Mr. Cohen," ordered the oculist, **"close your right eye and read this sentence."**

The patient read the sentence, whereupon he was asked to close his left eye this time and repeat the performance by reading another line of words.

At this point he hesitated. Removing his wallet, he turned to his wife and transferred it to her with a whisper:

"Here, Becky; you'd better hold on to this for a while. You never can tell when he'll want me to close both eyes at the same time."

THE wife of the great botanist beamed at him across the supper table.

"And these," she said, pointing to a large dish of mushrooms set before her, **"are all—all for me?"**

"Yes, dear," he replied. **"I gathered them especially for you."**

She smiled at him fondly. What a considerate and thoughtful husband he was! In a short time, with great relish, she had devoured the lot. At the breakfast-table next morning her husband greeted her anxiously.

"Sleep well last night?" he inquired.

"Splendidly!" she purred.

"No illness at all—no pains?" he pressed.

"Why, of course not, Fred! You needn't worry about my health."

"Hurrah, then!" exclaimed the botanist. **"At last I have discovered a new species of mushroom that isn't poisonous."**